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Cult of the Sacred Runes

Chapters 001 - 040

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Chapter 1 – The Mystic Runes and the Mystic Stances

The formless ancient world was infested with despicable demons. They hunted and feasted on mankind, keeping the human civilization constantly in a weak and suppressed state.

During the first known year, a magical mountain descended into the world from the realm of the Gods. Carved on this enormous mountain was a message: ‘Heaven Prevails’...

After the Grand Descent, a name that was given to the descending of the mountain, the Three Great Sages made their ways to Mystic Mountain where they learned to harvest what we now call magic, establishing the Mystic Cults and eighty-one sacred shrines to help aid mankind with the cult’s mystic powers against the eternal fight to the death with demons.

Green Moon Castle: Shrine of the South Star

Spring said its farewell with a session of refreshing rain as Green Moon City welcomed yet another summer.

The temperature was slightly too warm, making the students from all classes in the South Star sleepier than usual, with the exception of junior class three where everyone’s eyes were as wide open as possible; they

were staring into the center of the classroom where a fifteen or sixteen year old girl dressed in white was making a speech.

“The path of combat is full of obstacles. To rid yourself of your student status, you will need to climb through the star ranks and once you reach ten stars you can then graduate to become a warrior. After the warrior rank, one has to achieve the ‘Three Steps of Prime’: condensed prime, returned prime, and god’s prime. It’s anything but simple to achieve any of these three primes. The most talented men who broke through and transcended their primal energy to go beyond god’s prime are the ‘Supremes’ whose duty it is to protect mankind. There have only been thirty-six Supremes throughout the history of mankind but that’s not the end of our study of mystic powers. Only when one understands the ways of magic from the universe and can create one’s own ‘legendary mystic stance’, does one truly earn the status of a Sage. However, I am sure we all know how only three people in the history of mankind have reached the level of Sage!”

“We can now master tens of thousands of mystic stances, mystic runes, and ‘bone artifacts’. I dare say we really are blessed by the gods... Enough of that, let’s talk about mystic runes!”

The white dressed teenager was standing on the podium gazing upon the engaged students with her crystal clear eyes as she was giving the lesson. Her voice was ethereal and elegant like a flowing spring, clear and melodious.

Her name was Lin Zi Yan1, student of the ‘class of the gifted’ in South Star Academy. She was only fifteen years old, but about to become a warrior, some called what she achieved at her age sinister. Zi Yan learned her craft directly from the vice principal of South Star and it was a privilege for junior class three to have her as a substitute teacher.

“Metaphorically speaking if the mystic stances are letters and words, then mystic runes would be strokes. It’s impossible to write without strokes so in order to learn mystic stances one must understand the runes.”

“The ‘Triple Tidal Palm’ is a low level spirit mystic stance consisting thirty-six basic runes; today I am here to teach you the first three of the thirty-six!”

Zi Yan paced back and forth appreciating the students’ gratefulness on their faces from the detailed lecture and demonstration. Her purple hair which was glowing had a braid by her ear and she had golden crystal bead decorations in her hair making it appear almost like a shimmering waterfall. She was wearing a classic white long dress that sculpted her upper body like a work of art, her arm, which was sticking out of her sleeves, was as pale as white jade and on her wrist was a plain silver bracelet. Her elegance was almost indescribable, simplistic but yet special, like a fairy lotus on a snow capped summit far away from any impurity of the world.

Understudy of the vice principal, ten star Student, and an aspiring Warrior, stunning appearances and a mysterious background; all of these characteristics of Zi Yan caused her to be the focus of admiration for the class...

Mystic runes are a very complex and cumbersome system but Zi Yan wrote them perfectly with ease. She turned around to keep eye contact with the students as she finished the runes, which allowed students to get a glimpse of her neck and collarbone.. Complemented by the shine of the silk dress, like moonlight, it would charm anyone who put their eyes

on her.

The junior three class students were around twelve and thirteen years old; they looked as childish as ever, sitting there respectfully, staring at Miss Zi Yan with adoration and admiration. “Miss Zi Yan is so beautiful!”, “I have to become a warrior to fight by miss Zi Yan’s side against the demons!” Was how many of the boys’ thoughts read. To fight by her side was and would become some of the boys’ life goals and impossible dreams.

At the rearmost classroom sat a slightly skinny boy spaced out and not really noticed by the rest of the class. He had very proportional and defined chiselled facial features. Not that handsome, but there is a witty killer look in his eyes that made up for how generic he looked.

The boy, Ye Wei had very low self-awareness and self esteem, did not stand out in class or in family gatherings. The images of disappointed faces of his relatives when they learned Ye Wei’s Sentiant was red caused only a small facial spasm, this memory every now and then come to haunt him.

“Mystic runes... I have no hope of becoming a warrior in this life, why should I even bother learning mystic runes? I have no mastery over my primal energy. Also I don’t really think I can sketch a worthy rune...”

Ye Wei started thinking about the result he had gotten during the last entry test into South Star he took, and he squeezed out a self-deprecating smile from the corner of his mouth. His veins were bulging from holding his fist tight in a rush of frustration.

The sentient sorting system categorised the quality of new students, from red to violet and there were seven levels named after colours of the rainbow, red being the lowest and coincidentally that is what Ye Wei had. Thus, the tutors at South Star didn't really expect Ye Wei to be more than a ten star student, and being a warrior was definitely out of the picture.

“Bullied and teased at school and on top of that, nobody in my family is interested in me!” Ye Wei kept self-reflecting. “I would love to be a genius like Miss Zi Yan or a Warrior like my cousin Ye Zhong, the pride of our family. I wish to be admired as well.... why is reality so cruel!!”

Ye Wei carried too much remorse from his underachievements, it built up so much that he even tried the dangerous ‘booming’ multiple times, but failed to improve his Sentient.

Several years of penance that ultimately got him nowhere. This pain was not something ordinary people could endure. Although Ye Wei never gave up and was constantly trying, it was all for naught.

Ye Wei sighed; he could feel a dry taste of bitterness lingering. Instead staring at the old book made of heavy cardboard paper with loose bindings on his table, he drew tornadoes on his desk, unconsciously, without paying attention to the class anymore. The whole book looked dirty and covered with chalk marks.

On the cover of this ancient book was a towering mountain, and the mountain had some kind of carving on it. However, the damage on the book blurred the carving to an unreadable state; but still, the carvings radiated a faint feeling of righteousness.

This rugged ancient book was salvaged from a pile of trash in the Ye family basement. Legend had it that Ye was a very influential family name, and had a deep rooted mystic history with it being a supreme family but the glory was all but submerged under the dust of history and the rise and fall of dynasties..... The present day Ye family was only a second rate, washed up family in the western border town of Green Moon City of the Zhou Dynasty.

Ye Wei carried on procrastinating and started stroking the cover of the ancient book; the kind of roughness his fingertips felt was somehow foreign, both the texture and sensation.

What he wasn't aware of was the fact that a wave of energy was currently entering his body. Starting from the point of contact, like a stone thrown into a body of water, the energy spread and caused ripples on his skin. It surged and headed straight to his brain.

He yawned, a spell of sleepiness hit him hard causing him to close his eyes and in the next instant he was lying on the book deeply asleep.

This was one of those very long dreams. Ye Wei visualized a grand towering mountain that was green with lush pines and cypresses. If you really looked close enough, you could see millions of figures and lines all over the mountain; they seemed to resemble runic carvings which were moving in a wavelike motion, almost making it seem like the mountain was alive.. All of a sudden the mountain shattered into pieces of flame spitting rocks and before Ye Wei could do anything, one of rocks flew towards him. The mysterious lines on the rock came alive and left the rock to attach themselves onto Ye's head; they immediately started drilling and boring, evolving and transforming into information on

different kinds of mystic runes, giving Ye a monumental headache.

The mountain on the rugged ancient book cover disappeared silently....

Soon after, the book itself turned into fine dust, returning to nature with the summer breeze.

Chapter 2 – From Dream to Reality

Ye Wei's mind kept wandering as the dream seemed to carry on for centuries..

Meanwhile, Lin Zi Yan was still lecturing and explaining the inner workings of mystic runes. Her lecture was vivid, she tried to make the students understand how much the Three Sages' attributes mean to the world, as they know them. By appropriately referencing some classical volumes she was doing a great job of keeping the attention of the class. Except our one and only Ye Wei.

“Is this kid planning on ever waking up?”

Miss Zi Yan glanced towards the back of the room, her stare clearly expressed how displeased she was with Ye Wei as he had already slept half the lesson away, despite her best efforts to make a bland topic sound relevant and interesting. But all this meant as little to Ye Wei as pearls do to pigs.

Even when Miss Zi Yan was angry, her elegance did not fade. It made her even more attractive.

The boys sitting on Ye Wei's left look disgusted by Ye Wei's behaviour, fast asleep in their favourite teacher's class. The disrespect was unbearable for them.

“Ye Wei you are the bloody disgrace of our class, how dare you sleep through Miss Zi Yan's lessons!?”

“Maybe I didn’t kick his ass hard enough last time.”

The owner of these thoughts was a thirteen to fourteen years old looking teenager, Xiao Qi. Xiao Qi is always cold, it is evident in the way he is staring at Ye Wei right now, in the way he talks to others, and how he keeps a distance between himself and other human beings. Maybe it is due to the fact that he doesn’t need anyone. Top of the class, five stars Student, and the son of a South Star Academy senior instructor. Xiao is also an admirer of Miss Zi Yan.

Xiao Qi is gifted, it might have came from his parents, as both of them are senior instructors at South Star. Raised by them two, Xiao’s mastery and knowledge over mystic runes exceeded the rest of the class by a modest margin. Miss Zi Yan appreciates and recognises his talents, and on a few occasions she couldn’t help but praise him. That boosted Xiao’s ego by a mile, which is also the reason why Xiao Qi decided he’s the Guardian of Miss Zi Yan. Ye Wei’s behaviour contradicts many guidelines in his mind as to how people should behave in Miss Zi Yan’s class. Which means... yes Xiao Qi is furious.

Xiao Qi’s aggression was beginning to show from his posture. “Oh gosh, Ye Wei, you idiot! Never learn do you? Falling asleep in THIS lesson in front of Xiao Qi, ha good luck with that!” A few students started gossiping and betting how and when Xiao is going to kick Ye’s head in. “Popcorn time!” They thought.

At this point, Ye Wei is still only a one star Student, taking one step forward and two steps back in terms of his training. It takes little effort, if any, for the five star Xiao to beat up Ye.

In regards to star levels the first four are relatively easy to get through

and there are no obvious changes to one's body except enhanced stamina. But once a Student reaches five stars, their physique will become way better, the primal energy nourishes the skin and the muscles making it possible for one's skin to become tough as steel under impact. The enhanced muscles will cause one's strength and speed to improve drastically. Xiao Qi being a five star Student and Ye Wei stuck on the first star the distance between them is vast, like the mud on the ground compared to a fluffy cloud in the sky.

Ye Wei sits next to Cao Ning, and they maintain a healthy relationship with each other. They usually help each other out both in and out of class. Seeing the anger Xiao directed towards Ye building up Cao tried nudging Ye, an attempt at waking him up, however it didn't work at all as Ye Wei remained motionless, much like a dead pig.

'The nudge usually works. Bro it's not that I don't want to save you from this one, but you are too far gone...' Cao thinks with a wry smile on his face, rolling his eyes a little.

At this point Ye Wei was still stuck in the dream, where an uncountable amount of mystic runes were heading straight to his Sentient filling and overloading it. In the dream Ye Wei wandered into his own Sentient, he could see it changing, undergoing metamorphosis. His Sentient was now showing a hint of gold, with countless mysterious runic patterns circulating.

Has the whole bothersome red Sentient situation changed?

Ordinarily the colour of one's Sentient can only be one of the seven colours of the rainbow, a golden Sentient was unheard of. Ye Wei's Sentient is still mainly red, but a touch of gold is definitely present.

BOOM!!

His Sentient finally expanded, and it's about to crack into pieces.
“ARRGGGH!”

Ye Wei suddenly woke up, covered in cold sweat panting and gasping for air, and his head was still mildly aching. With a hint of fear lingering on his face, he started rubbing his temple, attempting to shake the headache. His vision started to clear up, and the objects in front of him looked like tables and chairs again as he regained consciousness.

At this point, the whole class had their judgemental eyes set on Ye Wei due to the scream he let out. “Is this Ye Wei guy for real? Let’s say we forgive him for sleeping through Miss Zi Yan’s class.. The screaming and the nightmares are a bit much!” “This guy is seeking attention or what?” “This daydreaming cretin!” The class started talking. “Ye Wei isn’t the brightest of minds, but usually he’s better disciplined in class and didn’t put his nose into other people’s business. Is he doing this to catch Miss Zi Yan’s Attention?” “Oh god, Ye Wei is gonna get into trouble.”

A couple of kind hearted students saw Xiao Qi’s ashen angry face and started to sympathise for Ye Wei, as they know for sure a beating is coming.

The classroom filled with laughter over Ye Wei’s apparent stupidity and also sympathetic sighs. But Ye Wei seemed to be ignoring all of the noise, his eyes showed no emotion, he had a big frown as if he’s experiencing great pain.

New knowledge about hundreds of thousands of mystic runes was jumping around in his head, overloading his mind, and trying to become part of his memory. As his mind gradually settled, his eyes stopped darting around erratically and regained focus.

‘What was that towering mountain in my dream? What happened to my Sentient?’

‘Why did I fall asleep, and why did I have such a ridiculous dream?’

Ye Wei’s gaze displayed how lost and incredibly surprised he was about the experience, his mood was also slightly affected by the long dream, and a peace and calmness grew inside him.

Miss Zi Yan had decided to pause her lecture, she was well mannered and patient, she tolerated Ye Wei sleeping through her lecture, but the screaming disrupted her attempt to educate and that was simply just too rude and out of line.

“You, stand up!” She gazed upon Ye, her crisp voice seemed a bit stern.

Ye Wei realised Miss Zi Yan was addressing him so he quickly stood up.

“What’s your name?” Zi Yan kept eye contact with Ye, asking with annoyance.

Zi Yan was frustrated, as she enjoyed giving lectures and she liked the company of most of these students; she always over prepared for her lectures and the students usually enjoyed how enthusiastic she was with

teaching. It was unimaginable that someone would fall asleep in her lectures, but this act of disruption topped the unimaginable.

“Ye Wei!” He replied subconsciously, while slowly raising his head, half of his body didn’t know it was awake. Information was slowly arranging itself in chronological order in his head: “This is Lin Zi Yan, one of the best students in the ‘class of the gifted’, South Star Academy, ten star level, soon to be Warrior, kind of a goddess in this academy and our sub teacher for the day.”

Ye Wei looked at her for a couple more seconds, her lilac glazed waist length hair flows in the wind as the fragrance from her hair diffuses across the room waking Ye Wei. “I’m in the middle of a class!” He finally sobered up and realised.

“This kid... hasn’t he woken up yet!?”

Miss Zi Yan looked at Ye Wei observing him. He’s slightly taller than her, slim build. The proportional facial features, and the dreamy eyes displayed a cool and relaxed temperament.

Openly and shamelessly sleeping in class, screaming and disturbing. Even Zi Yan has great patience, but this goes beyond that.

Although she’s only a substitute teacher for junior three, she gives her all to the job not giving up on a single student. Ye Wei was recognised as a waste of seat in the classroom by many, and teaching him was as hard as building a wall with nothing but mud. Even still Zi Yan cared and was willing to pay extra attention to help him in class.

Giving him one last chance Miss Zi Yan said, “Ye Wei, come up to the podium.”

Chapter 3 – The Forbidden Stances

“Is Miss Zi Yan losing her temper?”

“Sleeping through Miss Zi Yan’s class and disrupting with sheer rudeness, how can Miss Zi Yan not be angry?”

“Miss Zi Yan is undoubtedly the most popular girl in our academy, Ye Wei can kiss his life goodbye if her admirers catch wind of this little episode of indiscretion!”

Most of junior three were grinning mischievously, as if they already knew how this story would end, with Ye Wei rotting in a corner.

“Pfffft! He had it coming, there is no one he could nor should blame anyone but himself!” Xiao Qi taunted, it was obvious he was enjoying this moment from how much the corner of his mouth curled up.

“Ye Wei right? Have you ever heard of the story of Supreme Chen Feng?” Miss Zi Yan spoke with the utmost sincerity, while keeping eye contact with Ye Wei and sounding elegant as usual. Ye Wei’s talent was almost nonexistent and chances were that he would never become a Warrior in his lifetime, but he is still Zi Yan’s student and she felt that guiding him is her obligation.

“Supreme Chen Feng had nothing more than a red Sentient to work with when he was a teenager, but he didn’t give up, didn’t point fingers, or complain to anyone instead he put his efforts into studying thus understanding mystic runes. He perfected the Evergreen stance, the

Raging Bull stance, and also the Blazing Butterfly stance. The year he became thirty he became a household name, a renowned Runemaster. Since then he created many mystic stances and in the process he also managed to upgrade his Sentient, from red to blue. Ultimately, he was able to become a Supreme!"

"Your Sentient isn't something set in stone. By practicing, perfecting, and creating mystic stances one can resonate with nature. This ultimately yields energy from the cosmos which acts as a distiller, it cleanses and refines thus upgrading the Sentient!"

That being said creating and perfecting stances is easier said than done, only a handful of prestigious Runemasters are capable of such a feat, ordinary souls don't stand a chance.

Runemaster is a class above Warrior. As the title suggests they are extremely proficient at the art of mystic runes; they can refine them, create them, and they can even inscribe mystic scrolls. The power of a Runemaster is sought after by powers, governing bodies, and the rich and evil. To have a Runemaster on one's side often means winning wars and conquering nations.

There is only one Runemaster at South Star Academy, and he is none other than the vice principal. Although the principal and the school board had more power over administrating the academy, these people with fancier titles had the utmost respect for the vice principal.

The reason Runemasters are so highly valued is because of how truly rare they are!

First, Runemasters needed to master three hundred and sixty thousand basic mystic runes, of which every basic rune has its own complexities and properties. Therefore it's basically impossible to master them if one was talentless, even if you spend your whole life studying.

Furthermore mastering three hundred and sixty thousand runes is just the bare fundamentals of becoming a Runemaster. Soul sensitivity is the key to feeling mystic runes allowing one to find flaws, or just ways to improve runes. The stronger one's soul sensitivity is the more powerful the runes one can create and refine. One can only become a Runemaster by having satisfied these harsh and strange requirements, that is where their prestige and powerful status comes from.

“Supreme Chen Feng?”

Ye Wei slowly nodded listening to Miss Zi Yan's mild scolding, which was kind of heartwarming. He had been sleeping and shouting in class and his punishment for the offences was a motivational story.

“The path to mastery is through practice, it's never too late to start. Let's see how well you know these three mystic runes.”

Miss Zi Yan turned ever so slightly towards the blackboard, with her slender fingers she pointed at the three mystic runes she drew on the blackboard. As she turned, the neck opening on her white gauze dress exposed her extremely delicate collarbone and looking at her from the back made her look even slimmer. Her long hair hung like a classic looking curtain in an ancient castle. The top half of her dress was a tight fit, contouring her body, highlighting her curves.

“Ye Wei was fast asleep, like a pig, when Miss Zi Yan was describing the properties of these three runes. There was no way he could recognise

what they were, let alone how they worked.”

“He’s basically so dumb that even if the runes were flowing inside him, he wouldn’t be able to tell whether it was an itch, or a rune in his body!” A couple of mouthy students whispered jokingly in mocking tones.

Xiao Qi was sitting on the other side of the room with a twisted playful grin on his face. The grin caught Ye Wei’s attention as he groaned. Xiao Qi’s and his personalities were a monumental mismatch and furthermore Ye was only a mere one star Student unlike Xiao who was a five star, we can all imagine how well these two got along and how much they had in common.

The thought of having to be treated like dirt by despicable characters such as Xiao Qi was getting less and less appealing to Ye Wei!

He took a deep breath and raised his head to look at the three basic runes on the blackboard. Out of nowhere was a spark of inspiration, the runes felt familiar almost like they were flowing in his bloodstream.

Ye Wei blurted out: “These three mystic runes are from the rune set Water Seal, the set itself contains seventy-two runes and are all water type runes. These three runes are used in low Spirit level stances like the Triple Tidal Palm, Fist of the Oscillating Waves, Water Parting Finger, and Condensating Palm among others.

“The most used stance that uses these three mystic runes should be the mid Spirit level Ice Mirror Seal!”

His eloquent speech on runes and stances surprised even himself, “When did I learn all this?”. The winding runes glimmered faintly in Ye Wei’s Sentient, as he was talking about them.

As Ye Wei’s little speech echoed in the classroom, all the student were shocked. Everyone stopped what they were doing, their eyes wide open, looking at Ye Wei stunned into disbelief.

Was Ye Wei actually right?!

“How is this possible?”

Xiao Qi too was stunned, he couldn’t even comprehend how Ye Wei could possibly understand the three runes Miss Zi Yan was talking about while he was asleep!

“Not bad!” Miss Zi Yan looked Ye Wei right in his eyes as she praised him. ‘Seems like he wasn’t asleep for the whole thing, maybe he was listening half awake and picked up a thing or two.’

Upon hearing this praise, Ye realised that the knowledge on runes he had learned in his dream was real! And this dream might be related to that magical book, which, strangely, now was nowhere to be seen.

Inside his Sentient there were countless runes flowing around shimmering in a golden hue.

“Pfft, mystic runes are way more complicated than that? I bet this idiot won’t be able to answer if Miss Zi Yan digs deeper with her questions! It

was just dumb luck." Xiao Qi was trying so hard looking at Miss Zi Yan trying to send her a telepathic message, "Ask him more questions!" hoping Ye Wei would make a fool of himself answering them.

Miss Zi Yan got the signal as she chuckled and asked, "So how many runes are used in Fist of the Oscillating Waves? That I went through that in class just now?"

"Sixteen."

"How about Water Parting Finger?"

"Twenty-one!"

Ye Wei answered with great fluency.

It was out of everyone's imagination that Ye Wei knew enough to answer these questions, and everyone in class was looking at each other in awe. He couldn't have picked up this much before he fell asleep. Everyone was guessing he studied previously and learned before attending today's lecture, as there was no way he could have learned all this from Zi Yan's teaching while he was fast asleep having a nightmare.

What they didn't know was Ye Wei did learn all of that during his sleep. And how much he learned was completely beyond their imagination!

As Zi Yan was looking at Ye his relaxed posture displayed a sense of indifference. She wanted to test his rune knowledge further and see what

level he was on. She blinked and asked him the next question with a smile on her face: “How many mystic stances can one compose with these three runes?”

The spotlight was on Ye Wei again, as everyone in class looked to him wanting to see what his answer would be, as the questions Mis Zi Yan just asked was not covered in the lecture. Even the students who were paying full attention wouldn’t be able to answer it, let alone the clueless Ye Wei who slept through the lecture.

“I don’t see anyone else in junior three other than myself and Miss Zi Yan who could provide an answer.” Xiao Qi laughed at Ye Wei, as he took a nice deep breath holding his head high. With pride he scanned the classroom feeling superior to the rest of the flock, his eyes finally settling on Miss Zi Yan. He was looking forward to basking in the glory of answering the questions when Ye Wei finally chokes So he could gain even more presence in Miss Zi Yan’s heart.

Xiao Qi’s parents are senior class instructors at the academy, and when it comes to knowledge on runes, it’s safe to say Xiao Qi is the best in class!

“There are in total thirty-eight low level spirit stances, twelve mid level spirit stances, and six high spirit stances that consist of these three runes!” The pressure of being the centre of attention did not make Ye Wei hesitate, with his eyes on Miss Zi Yan, he answered calmly and with certainty.

“Nonsense!”

“Ye Wei can you please just keep it shut if you don’t know the right answer? People are trying to learn in this class and you are not helping!” Xiao Qi stood up with intensity, looking down on Ye Wei showing nothing but contempt, meaning every word he said hoping it would teach Ye Wei a lesson.

Xiao Qi has been waiting to let his frustration out, now he feels relieved.

“Oh Ye doesn’t know what he is talking about!”

“I’d have guessed Ye had it right judging by how calm he looked.”

“Ye Wei is definitely a confident man!”

Xiao Qi is the best student in junior three, both in real combat and rune knowledge his level is way beyond the others. Now that Xiao is calling Ye’s bluff, everyone in class believed Ye was talking trash and therefore started judging him.

“Ye Wei, may I educate you with the correct answer?! There are thirty-six low level spirit stances, ten mid level spirit stances, and five high level spirit stances that are made up by the three runes we just went through in class!” The sneer on Xiao Qi’s face was ice cold, as he stared at Ye Wei with pride. ‘I am second to none in this class when it comes to rune knowledge!’ He thought.

Surprisingly though Miss Zi Yan did not correct Ye Wei, instead she looked at him with her crystal clear eyes.

“Xiao Qi is not wrong.” Zi Yan slowly said.

Xiao Qi instantly became proud of himself after Zi Yan’s approval. While staring down Ye Wei with a playful glare. You have nothing on me Ye Wei, you piece of trash.

Zi Yan wasn’t finished! “But Ye Wei is correct too!”

At this point everyone in class was shocked. “How can they both be right?”

Zi Yan looked at Ye Wei showing a hint of curiosity: “Some stances take a big toll on the practitioner’s bodies and minds as such they are listed as forbidden. If you count those in Ye Wei was correct!”

The classroom went completely quiet.

The forbidden mystic stances were documented then archived in the academy court, which is only accessible to Warriors and even they don’t always have success with them, where on earth did Ye Wei learned about the forbidden stances?

Chapter 4 – Triple Tidal Palm Technique

“How could this be? There is no way on earth Ye Wei knows about the forbidden stances, these have to be wild guesses!” Xiao Qi was not pleased. His crazy eyes staring at Ye with rage and jealousy, as this was the first time he had been outshined in junior three.

And right in front of Miss Zi Yan!

This undermined his confidence like a face-numbing slap!

Zi Yan was evaluating the situation; if he got one of the answers correct it might have been luck, but three times out of three? The probability of him being that lucky was too low to even count. Her irises were black resembling shining onyx and they held great clarity, but the way she was looking at Ye Wei conveyed obscurity.

“Ye Wei, may I ask where exactly you gathered information about forbidden techniques at? How they can be formed into thirty-eight low level spirit stances, twelve mid level ones, and six high level ones?”

Zi Yan herself would have had the same answer as Xiao Qi. Thirty-six low level spirit stances, ten mid level spirit stances, and five high level spirit stances could be composed by combining the three runes that she mentioned earlier in the lecture. She thought that was true until recently when she had a chat with the vice principal about the Glacier rune set. During which he unintentionally mentioned forbidden stances, from there she did some research on them.

Ye Wei, an ordinary student from junior three, South Star Academy, should not possess such knowledge.

When passing on knowledge to students, tutors will never mention forbidden techniques, and most teaching materials will not mention forbidden techniques either. Only the Mystic Technique Encyclopaedia published by the Holy Conservatory, that has been amended twenty-eight times, contains this information about forbidden techniques.

Mystic Techniques Encyclopaedia is the most detailed archive of research from every corner of the vast world, from every corner of every continent. The depth of the research is so detailed it turns away the vast majority of potential readers, who are mostly talented scholars with exceptional understanding of runes and stances. The seventy-two book collection which is more than ten million words long is seen as an obstacle for the handful of dedicated researchers that study it. Sadly most of these souls finish taking their last breath without ever getting close to finishing the collection.

“Miss Zi Yan, it’s just a matter of experience. The more you read, the more knowledge accumulates in your mind and one’s educated guesses become more and more accurate. That’s how I knew the answers...” Ye Wei shrugged casually, as he answered Miss Zi Yan’s question.

This unbelievable exchange of words between Miss Zi Yan and Ye Wei was echoing in the student’s minds and now all eyes were on Ye Wei. They were wondering how Ye became so proficient on rune knowledge, and how he also knew about the otherwise unheard of forbidden techniques!

“Is this really Ye Wei standing in front of us? The supposedly

inadequate waste of space with red Sentient?"

This thought was shared by the whole class, the prejudice slowly dissolved, replaced by admiration.

Xiao Qi tightened his fist, staring at Ye again with extreme prejudice. 'So he knows a thing or two about runes, what of it? It's not like he's ever going to become anything useful. He can't rub the red off his Sentient, and he will never ever become a Warrior!'

'Gaining the attention of the class in one lecture does not grant you bragging rights for a lifetime, you're still merely a one star Student, and I will get you back very very soon!' He sat himself down, attempting to calm his aggravated self as his authority in class is being challenged.

Ye Wei's Sentient is red, but if he could familiarise himself with rune knowledge, maybe he would have an extremely slim chance of becoming a Runemaster! He can try to follow Supreme Chen Feng's footsteps, creating basic stances and little by little gain energy from the cosmos, therefore refining his Sentient.

An assumption appeared in Miss Zi Yan's mind, 'Maybe Ye Wei is not hopeless at practising martial arts, perhaps he stayed up too late reading about runes? That would explain why he fell asleep during the lecture. Maybe he's walking the path of becoming a Runemaster?'

This idea raised Miss Zi Yan's heartbeat. It is way more of a feat to train a Runemaster than to train a Warrior, it would be a hundred times more satisfying.

‘To become a Runemaster, soul sensitivity is of utmost importance... Let’s see what he’s got!’

Miss Zi Yan raised her head, excited.

“Look at this stance!”

Zi Yan waved her slender hand. Invisible will-force condensing on the tip of her index finger, primal energy flowed from her dantian to her fingertips, merging with the will-force like ink onto a quill tip. And with her finger as a pen she drew the thirty-six runes in the air.

The complex and winding runes tangled together in a systematic way, forming a pattern that resembles offshore tides. Multiple hefty waves of force erupted from Zi Yan’s hands with a faint sound of crashing waves, echoing in the classroom. The students could almost smell the saltiness of the sea alongside the force of the rushing tide.

When performed to its full potential in real combat, the force of the rushing tide comes in waves, when the first wave impacts the target it creates a small vacuum, drawing the next wave towards the point of impact. The momentum this technique creates therefore ramps up and become stronger, as long as the dantian of the practitioner is not empty.

Unmistakably, it’s the low level spirit mystic stance, Triple Tidal Palm!

The class is looking at the rushing tide patterns in front of of Miss Zi Yan. The excitement make the early teenages look even younger than they are.

“Mystic stance, that was a mystic stance!”

Seven stars is usually the break point when Students start to have enough Qi in their dantian to support a stance, a point nobody in the junior class has yet reached. Even Xiao Qi, the best student here is merely at five stars and incapable of performing a stance. Seeing something out of their reach, the class is electrified from Miss Zi Yan displaying a stance.

“What do you think of this?!”

Miss Zi Yan cast Ye Wei a fiery glance, expecting to be impressed. What the class did not know was that this was a spirit sensitivity test for the celebrity of the day; while executing the stance, she intentionally left a flaw, reducing the power of her Triple Tidal Palm to one third its potential.

“Something is off!”

Unlike rest of the class, Ye Wei was not impressed. He frowned a little as his mildly suspicious eyes set on three specific nodes of the thirty-six runes drawn by Miss Zi Yan.

‘There are three distinct mistakes in your stance!’

‘Miss Zi Yan is a ten star elite from the gifted class, performing low Spirit level stances like Triple Tidal Palm should be a walk in the park, how could she make such simple mistakes?’

Ye Wei is confused but he smelled something fishy, for Miss Zi Yan to make three mistakes is simply ridiculous. He does not know what a perfect Triple Tidal Palm looks like, but this just felt imperfect, on a deeper level it even felt wrong, especially those three nodes!

What Ye Wei did not know was Miss Zi Yan intended to commit only one mistake while performing, not three!

“Miss Zi Yan...”

Ye Wei hesitated, not knowing for sure if his soul sensitivity was being tested, therefore unsure if he should point out the errors in her stance in front of the whole class.

After all it's not very dignifying getting corrected by none but her own student, in front of the whole class!

“What's the matter? Just tell us!” Miss Zi Yan could sense Ye's hesitation, as an attempt to encouraging him, she put a heart-warming smile on her face and patted his shoulder gently.

The encouraging look of Miss Zi Yan only inches away from Ye Wei's own, a faint hint of her fragrance picked up by Ye Wei's nose, his face got a bit warm and he started blushing. He grinded his teeth then finished pondering. With certainty he pointed at one of the three ‘flawed’ nodes and started speaking: “This node... It is obstructing your qi flow, I'm guessing you could have gotten more out of Triple Tidal Palm if your qi flowed smoother, Miss Zi Yan...”

Chapter 5 – Soul Perception

Ye Wei was trying to keep his voice down, but it was still clear and loud enough for everyone in the classroom to hear. After a brief moment of complete silence, mocking laughter broke out from everyone and filled the classroom.

“Hahaha! Is this some kind of joke? This one star level, the last in class is criticising Miss Zi Yan, pinpointing which nodes are wrong with her Triple Tidal Palm?”

“Haha! Boy, you are far in over your head now!”

“Just because Miss Zi Yan asked you for your opinion doesn’t mean that you can say anything. You can’t even perform a stance yourself, what would you know about performing a stance?” The class ridiculed Ye Wei ruthlessly.

“It’s obvious that you have read a couple of books, but you ought to know your limits. For example, speaking out against an elite student, from the class of the gifted, is crossing the line.” Xiao Qi’s upper lip curled up in disdain, slowly forming a sadistic smile. “What an absolute loser, Miss Zi Yan’s stance being flawed? Please...”

‘Let’s take a gigantic step back, even if Miss Zi Yan’s stance was not completely perfect, you do not point it out in front of the whole class that boldly. This is really humiliating for Miss Zi Yan, regardless whether she is right or not. Ye Wei you cretin, can you stop testing her temper?!’

Xiao Qi gleefully smiled, thinking: 'This should do it. Ye Wei should be dead to Miss Zi Yan after this incident.'

The class could not believe their ears when they heard what came next!

Miss Zi Yan's mind went blank for a moment.

"Well said!"

She is having trouble processing all of this, then praised Ye Wei generously, looking at his face as if she had just discovered a diamond in the rough.

Contrary to what Xiao Qi's thought, Miss Zi Yan became more happy than mad.

Zi Yan deliberately made a mistake to test Ye Wei's soul sensitivity. He felt the abnormality in the Qi flow. She was if anything obviously more happy than angry.

Such sharp soul sensitivity from a one star Student, it is indeed impeccable! Ye Wei is good for something after all, if some resources are spent on him, he could really become something. Even if his path does not lead him to becoming a Warrior, becoming a Runemaster is still a possibility!

In Green Moon City, every one in ten Students becomes a Warrior, but not even one in ten thousands could become a Runemaster! There are only three people in the entire Green Moon City that are qualified to

have the title Runemaster in front of their name!

Other than creating stances themselves, by identifying flaws and imperfections with their excellent soul sensitivity, Runemasters can help others refine and improve their runes and stances, the relationships between Runemasters and the fighters they service are symbiotic as the services help Runemasters getting onto guestlists of the finest gatherings hosted by influential people.

Lin Zi Yan took a deep, deep breath, trying to keep herself calm. But despite her best efforts, the smile on her face showed joy and excitement: “How would you improve it?”

The fact Ye Wei can point out where the flaws are indicates that his soul sensitivity is way more developed than other Students his age.

‘Should I tell Miss Zi Yan how I think it should be done?’

Ye Wei frowned, he has an idea of how to soothe the flow, but he is hesitant. Seeing that the class was already in shock, a lot of questions would be asked. If he is right, how is he suppose to explain the way he gained this knowledge and these abilities? He’s not planning on telling anyone about the towering mountain and what he experienced, that is if he could even put it all into words. What if he gets it wrong? Then he will be devoured by the enemy he just made... The bottom line is that he does not want to draw any more attention to himself.

“Ah! So Miss Zi Yan did that on purpose. Still... how did Ye Wei spot the flaw?” A handful of students looked at Ye Wei, and started discussing pausing throughout the discussion shaking their heads, not exactly

certain as to how he could know this.

Being a Students at South Star, the fundamentals of the mystic techniques and applications of them are taught to the young. Even if they are only in the junior class, they know what Ye Wei's ability to spot flaws in mystic stances could imply...

It means Ye Wei's soul sensitivity is exceptional, that he is able to feel the flow of primal energies in stances and therefore the flaws where the flow is uneven.

Xiao Qi clenched his fist even tighter, his nails digging into his palm. His bloodshot eyes struggling to focus on anything. He's spending all his energy trying to convince himself what just happened was a fluke, but the jealousy within him was just burning hotter as the evidence suggesting otherwise built up.

‘No! This is impossible! Ye Wei definitely does not have what it takes to become a Runemaster...’

‘This happens but even a hungry blind cat can get lucky and walk into a dead mouse sometimes. We'll see what happens next Ye Wei, luck can only get you so far! You are garbage! Infamous garbage known to all in South Star Academy, how can you possibly have what it takes to become a Runemaster?’

Xiao Qi was well aware of what would happen next if Ye Wei does have what it takes... Even if his Sentient is the worst, as red as a plump cherry tomato, being a Runemaster means the capability of harvesting cosmic energy, which can help upgrade ones Sentient! And if he gets trained as a

Runemaster, characters like the vice-principal, the principal, and others on the school board are going to recognise him as an asset to the academy.

From a piece of garbage to a potential Runemaster in one lecture, Xiao Qi can not accept this cinderella story, nor how Ye Wei might become more feared and respected than he is by the class and the rest of South Star.

‘Ye Wei actually might make it as a Runemaster... I bullied him quite often in the past... Is he going to seek revenge?’ One of the tall built bullies looked concerned and anxious, imagining the ways Ye Wei could get him back. He quickly opted to apologise sincerely to Ye Wei after the lecture.

The wrath of a Runemaster can be gruesome, apart from worsening the target’s future, it could affect his/her family’s reputation for generations!

“Xiao Qi you short-sighted bastard, if it wasn’t for you I wouldn’t have been mean to Ye Wei. Now what am I going to do?” The tall bully mumbled.

After displaying his soul sensitivity, Ye Wei’s image in the minds of his classmates was updated. His social status had risen, overtaking Xiao Qi.

Best Student in junior three? Five stars level? Your parents are tutors of the senior classes? Get this Xiao Qi, all of this will means nothing if we have a Runemaster in our class! The social dynamics in the class has been shaken and it is slowing changing... And that tells us a lot about what kind of respect being a Runemaster gets you, merely displaying the

potential of becoming one basically won Ye Wei the hearts of the class!

A handful of girls who had been ignoring Ye Wei for as long as they could remember, started to appreciate Ye Wei's looks. For them, his facial features changed slightly, reassembled a more fanciable Ye Wei.

It is not a secret that Ye Wei's family are not nobles, but as things look right now, if Ye shows more talent, it would not be long until a Runemaster notices him. And being an apprentice Runemaster does open doors, granting him and his family a few privileges.

Standing on the podium, Ye Wei is feeling the tension he created and the attention that came with it. He smiled, not because he is happy, just to be polite. Reluctant to deal with the situation, he shook his head, the few girls who were starting to fancy him were looking at him, fishing for eye contact with their flirty eyes. However, Ye Wei showed no interest.

Ye Wei is familiar to seeing the change of social dynamics when people think they can take advantage of a particular person. That is why he is felt a bit dejected. He was hoping that the people he trusted before this lecture would not change their minds about him and would continue to hang out with him, and not do so for the wrong reasons.

Ye Wei now remembered what his father once told him: "When you're doing well, all people around are opportunists, but it's when you are in a bad position in life then you know who your real friends are, who are genuinely fond of you and would support you for who you are."

Real friends will never belittle you when you are feeling down.

Seeing as how Ye Wei still hasn't suggested ways to correct the flaw, Miss Zi Yan thought it was the end of the ride. To be fair, refining stances is a difficult if not impossible task for any Student, let alone for Ye Wei who is merely a one star Student. Being able to sense the hiccups does indicate Ye Wei has some sort of talent, but it was still not safe enough to say he would become a Runemaster from the little information Zi Yan gathered.

If Ye Wei can briefly point out what in the stance could be polished, Miss Zi Yan might start to consider other ways to train Ye Wei.

Mastering rune knowledge, sensing flaws and mistakes in stances are the basics, a Runemaster's value is in their abilities to refine and create stances.

‘If Ye Wei is capable of refining this stance, by definition, would Ye Wei be a Runemaster?!’ Miss Zi Yan overthought. ‘No, I should not think too far ahead, Ye Wei has shone more than enough. He can learn how to refine stances in the future, let’s do this one step at a time.’

Chapter 6 – Three Mistakes

“Ye Wei, Miss Zi Yan would very much like you to try and suggest how the stance can be improved.” She tried to push him again for an answer, waiting to be surprised and see just how much he knew.

“Erm... about that...” Not willing to give up anything, Ye Wei was trying to stall as much as possible.

Dong~ Dong~ Dong~

As Ye Wei struggled to deal with the situation, the muffled chiming of the school bell interrupted him.

Finally, the lecture is over!

Ye Wei felt relieved as the school bell saved him. He smiled at Lin Zi Yan, scratching the back of his head and saying, “Miss Zi Yan, since the lecture is over, what do you say to resuming this discussion next time?”

Ye Wei knew that his statement would end this drama, as Zi Yan was just a substitute teacher and it was uncertain the next time she would be teaching junior three’s class.

“Class dismissed.” Miss Zi Yan ended the lecture. “Not you, Ye Wei. You are coming with me!” Judging from the soul sensitivity Ye displayed earlier, Zi Yan was pretty certain Ye Wei had potential; as such, she would arrange for Ye Wei to meet one of the Runemasters for further

assessment.

Ye Wei really thought he got away with this one, but Miss Zi Yan had other plans. He could not refuse an order from her and therefore followed her out of the classroom, reluctantly.

As soon as the two were out of sight, the class engaged in an intense discussion. Gossip and chatter filled the room.

“His senses are so sharp! I didn’t expect that from Ye, that guy has no talent for fighting, whatsoever...”

“Where is Miss Zi Yan taking him to? Probably to a Runemaster to verify if the show he put on was genuine? If that was real he’d probably start studying under a master!”

The class was as envious as they were curious. They always looked down on Ye Wei because of his Sentient, but with Ye’s newfound talent, the tables were slowly turning.

Cao Ning and a couple of Ye Wei’s real friends were genuinely happy for him and a bit jealous at the same time, like everyone else.

“Shut up! All of you!” Xiao Qi slammed the table with a heavy strike, the veins on his arms bulging. Having the spotlight taken off him was hard enough, but taken by someone he had been abusing, someone he deemed inferior, was something way more humiliating. Xiao Qi was drowning in envy; he couldn’t deal with the sudden debut of Ye’s apparently new talent.

Frustrated and envious, Xiao Qi was in denial. “It can’t be true... Why don’t I have greater soul sensitivity? Why can’t Miss Zi Yan only look at me?”

Lin Zi Yan was only fifteen years old and she was already a ten star Student, one step away from becoming a Warrior. When it came to her appearance, she was impeccable. Her soft, pretty face, graceful posture, and perfectly proportioned body... In the whole student body of South Star Academy, there were no more than three boys who were attractive and smart enough to match her. That list of three of course excludes Ye Wei, who was unknown until today!

Lin Zi Yan was a gentle and friendly person, but anyone who knew her well enough knew that when she talked to people she liked, she kept a bit of distance to protect herself. Now she was walking close to an unfamiliar face. It drew a lot of attention and eyes, and many people wondered who exactly was walking behind Zi Yan.

Feeling the intensity of everyone’s gazes, Ye Wei realised becoming close to Zi Yan would make him the center of attention, and in turn his every move would be observed. It takes a lot of self-esteem and confidence to overcome everyone’s judgemental looks. ‘How stressful must it to be her boyfriend...’ Ye Wei wondered.

Luckily he wasn’t.

Walking down the gravel trail that ran through the campus, Ye Wei followed Miss Zi Yan to the gate of Green Phoenix Hall.

The Green Phoenix Hall was one of the female dormitories on South Star Academy campus. Here resided the female scholars in the senior classes who reached the top of their class, and those who were soon to be promoted to the Warrior rank. Being very close to becoming a Warrior, Zi Yan won herself a place at Green Phoenix Hall. She was then allowed to skip ordinary classes, not having to waste time in them. Unlike ordinary students who usually needed to go through the junior, intermediate, and senior class to reach the ten star level and eventually become a Warrior.

There were thirty-eight junior classes, thirty-six intermediate classes, and twenty-five senior classes, and outside these ranks, for the exceptional talents in South Star, there was a class for the gifted of which Lin Zi Yan was a part of. South Star academy taught five thousand three hundred and seventy students... But there were less than a hundred qualified enough to live at Green Phoenix!

Looking at the rows of classical elegant houses beyond the gate, Ye Wei's mind wandered. His memories from half a year ago resurfaced; his brain remembered a time past: a girl and him standing against the backdrop of these beautiful houses... With bittersweet memories slowly filling his head, the edge of his lips curled up slightly.

“Hurry!” Ye Wei snapped out of his nostalgia as Lin Zi Yan gave him a little tug towards the entrance.

“Okay.” Ye Wei nodded reluctantly then unwillingly followed Miss Zi Yan through the gate towards the isolated quarters of Green Phoenix.

‘I swore to myself that I would never step foot near Green Phoenix Hall again.’ Images of the girl, Joe Yin, flashed in Ye Wei’s head again. He shook his head with regret, letting out a depressing sigh.

‘Sometimes people drift apart from each other over time, but time also heals and changes a person. I should stop dwelling on this!’ Ye Wei let positive ideas overcome dark ones, holding his head high. A growing confidence could be seen in his eyes.

Ye Wei followed Zi Yan into a little courtyard, and next to it was a small house. Upon realising that Zi Yan, herself, lived here, Ye Wei was quite astonished. It was completely out of his imagination that Zi Yan would have her own house and garden at Green Phoenix Hall, especially when the majority of students were assigned to smaller and less luxurious accommodations, sometimes even just a lone bunk bed.

It must be great to be Lin Zi Yan!

They entered the spacious training chamber within her house, and Zi Yan was eager to get to work. Without saying a word, she hastily willed will-force to the tip of her index finger. Primal energy flowed from her dantian to her fingertips, merging with the will-force. And with her finger she drew the thirty-six runes in the air while making one mistake in the process, but the runes none the less formed a rushing tide pattern, the Triple Tidal Palm!

“Ye Wei, now that we’re alone, can you tell me what’s wrong with it?” Zi Yan was determined to get to the bottom of this.

“Miss Zi Yan, if I am not mistaken, you were trying to test me, right? Why is it so important that I correct this? Does it really matter?” Ye Wei fired a few questions with annoyance, while keeping a smile on his face to be polite.

“It would be game changing! If you could correct this, I would refer you to an established Runemaster. You might even become his apprentice and eventually someone who matters!” Zi Yan explained her intention sincerely. “And if you couldn’t, I would like to refer you to a journeyman who is not as brilliant, but his teaching maybe more understandable for your level.”

Ye Wei was touched having heard the confession and realised Zi Yan had pure intentions. His frustration, which he partially blamed Zi Yan for, over the scene in class and the hassle during the lecture subsided.

When he slept during, and eventually interrupted, the lecture, he was seen as a careless student; however, Zi Yan overlooked the negatives and tried to motivate him. He had only shown a bit of his newfound talent, yet she was ready to put a word in for him with an established Runemaster.

Ye Wei felt grateful for Miss Zi Yan’s expectations, he couldn’t help but admire her for her sincerity.

No longer frustrated, Ye Wei opened up: “Miss Zi Yan, the stance you displayed earlier and just now had three very obvious mistakes.” Ye Wei looked at the thirty-six glimmering runes in the air, took two steps back, and stood right next to Miss Zi Yan ready to give his opinion on the mistakes.

“Three mistakes? Did you just say you felt three mistakes?!” Zi Yan was flabbergasted. It was only now that she knew Ye Wei saw three mistakes. ‘But I only left one flaw?!’ she thought. Ironically, Ye Wei had assumed

she left three flaws, not one! How could that be?

Chapter 7 – Refinement

Triple Tidal Palm was just a low level stance, but it had special significance to Green Moon because it was the first mystic stance created by Green Moon City's own Condensed Prime level Warrior, the great Warmaster Jiang Liu!

Back in the dark times, when hordes of demons besieged Green Moon City, Warmaster Jiang Liu held the front line of the city's defence, leading the armed forces. He fought valiantly for three days and three nights in the fierce battle, and he eventually passed away from extreme fatigue, having slain tens of thousands of demons.

Green Moon City would not be standing this day if it weren't for Warmaster Jiang Liu, and the millions of citizens have not forgotten about his contribution; the story of the Warmaster's noble sacrifice would forever be sung by bards and told by the older generations. For the Jiang family the Triple Tidal Palm held great significance, as it was the very first creation of Warmaster Jiang Liu. Over the years, the Jiangs paid seven visits to the Runemaster's Union and held small conferences with the Runemasters, trying to perfect the stance. They could feel there were some imperfections with the stance, but none of the Runemasters could take the next step and pinpoint the flaws. Thus, sadly, the attempts to perfect Triple Tidal Palm to date have not yielded results.

Lin Zi Yan didn't carry the Jiang family name, but her mother did. Zi Yan was the Warmaster's granddaughter.

Having just heard Ye Wei found three flaws when she only intentionally left one, Zi Yan's hope surged as there was a chance Ye Wei

could help perfect this special stance.

She looked at Ye Wei, shocked at how strong his soul sensitivity was and wondering where it all suddenly came from.

“So what are the three mistakes?” Zi Yan tried to suppresses her excitement. She looked at Ye Wei nervously.

Ye Wei didn’t know Miss Zi Yan was trying to perfect the Triple Tidal Palm. Taking the task for a casual quiz, he raised his index finger up in a relaxed way, pointing at three connecting nodes between the runes. One of the flawed nodes was left there by Zi Yan intentionally, though the other two looked completely normal for her and the Runemasters who had been studying this stance too; nobody had ever said anything about these two nodes in the conferences!

“And how do you think these three flaws can be corrected? Would you show me?” There was a trace of trembling in Zi Yan’s otherwise clear voice. Her eyes completely set on Ye Wei, engaging herself in this attempt to completely perfect the stance.

“I am only a one star Student, I don’t have sufficient primal energy!”

Ye Wei shook his head, feeling a bit saddened and frustrated. Ye Wei thought to himself, sighing, ‘How does she expect to me to demonstrate it? I am just a one star Student, ha, I can barely draw a rune.’

Triple Tidal Palm was a low level stance, but there were still thirty-six runes, each extremely complex and cumbersome. To correct the flaws was

not an easy task and it was even harder attempting it purely by words, which was the only way Ye Wei could.

“Erm...”

Realising she got carried away, Zi Yan looked at Ye Wei apologetically. She completely forgot Ye Wei was only a one star Student. Ye Wei still had a lot of training ahead of him before he could manipulate his Qi and even more training until he had enough Qi and primal energy to sustain a stance.

“I’m sorry. Can you try to talk me through how it can be refined and perfected?” Zi Yan was getting a bit restless.

“The connecting node between the sixth and the seventh runes need to be smoother, more... circular. The tenth and the eleventh runes need to be swapped, replaced by...” Ye Wei tried to be as detailed as possible, but he struggled, as he did not know the proper terminology.

Zi Yan started to frown. She didn’t understand half of what Ye Wei said. She did not comprehend much concerning advanced rune structures, because she was supposed to learn that after becoming a Warrior.

To refine a stance, one had to understand and be familiar with performing stances!

Zi Yan grinded her teeth in frustration. She was trying to think outside the box, looking for ways to make Ye Wei’s method clear: “Ye Wei, stand

behind me!” She blushed as she ordered Ye Wei.

Triple Tidal Palm meant everything to her family. The Jiangs had been dreaming for decades on how to improve the first stance created by Warmaster Jiang Liu. This wish was the same for Zi Yan; being the Warmaster’s granddaughter, she was not going to let this chance of honouring her granddad slip past her.

“Oh?” The shy Ye Wei hesitated before agreeing: “Okay!” Ye Wei moved behind Zi Yan, keeping a breadth of distance between the two as he started to draw on thin air, and Zi Yan copied his motions.

Following Ye Wei’s guidance, Zi Yan slowly drew the runes for Triple Tidal Palm. Feeling Ye Wei breathing down her neck, her heart started beating faster... It was her first time being so close to a boy. Zi Yan took a deep breath and ignored the distraction.

Her primal energy flowed through her fingers as she began drawing the runes.

“That’s not right!” Ye Wei scolded.

As Ye Wei’s voice faded, the half finished rune imploded.

It had failed!

Zi Yan was slightly disappointed but did not give up: “Let’s continue!”

Ye Wei repeated the process a few more times, drawing in the air as Zi Yan followed. None of their attempts were successful, though, and they

took a toll on Zi Yan's primal energy reserve. After several attempts, she was left panting and gasping for air.

"Miss Zi Yan, how about just letting it go for now? We can do this some other time, maybe?" Ye Wei said with a bitter smile. He then looked at Zi Yan, and because she had sweat a lot during the attempts to refining the stance, her dress glued to her body, revealing her pale and flawless skin. Ye Wei lingered for a bit too long and started to have inappropriate thoughts and knew he needed to stop his mind from wandering. He blushed and turned his head around.

"No!" Zi Yan shook her head with determination; she needed to refine this stance while she had the chance! For her family, for her grandad!

Zi Yan reached into her pocket and found a white pill. She quickly swallowed it and sat down in a lotus position, restoring her primal energy and Qi.

Ye Wei was speechless. That was a Primal Spirit pill... one of the most valuable medicinal pills that most Warriors couldn't even afford.

In a lotus position, Zi Yan was completely focused on restoring her energy while Ye Wei just stood there, as he had nothing to do. He cast his eyes down onto her. Zi Yan's slightly curled lashes, her delicate nose, pastel pink lips... Her features were exquisitely beautiful... Framed by her silky shoulder length hair, she resembled a goddess from the classic sculptures.

Ye Wei's eyes followed her slender neck downwards and his heart raced as his eyes stopped below her neckline. He could see her slightly raised

breasts, not large but perky, forming magnificent cleavage between them, and her light toned skin was flushed, making her that much more alluring for Ye Wei.

Ye Wei being the teenager he was and alone in the same room with the most popular girl in school was an incredible feat and a rare occasion; his impulses were taking over his body!

“What am I thinking!” Ye Wei shook his head vigorously, trying to rid himself of the impure thoughts. He took a very deep breath and forced himself to look up at the roof. But the thought of Zi Yan’s beauty, her body, forced his head back down, and he couldn’t help but take this chance to look at her again.

Moments after, Zi Yan opened her eyes. With the aid of one Primal Spirit pill, Zi Yan restored all of her energy in a matter of minutes.

She raised her head, and when she was about to say something, her and Ye Wei’s eyes crossed. Judging by how red his face was, Zi Yan realised her posture exposed a lot of skin.: “Ah!” she exclaimed. Her shy face was colored red due to her blushing cheeks. She immediately stood up, not letting Ye Wei see her like that a second longer.

“I...” Ye Wei was embarrassed. He tried to apologise but choked up instead.

Zi Yan adjusted her breathing and eventually calmed down. She was embarrassed, too, but she let it pass without saying a word. ‘At least Ye Wei knew that it was a bit inappropriate,’ she thought. Ye Wei was a lot more honest and less aggressive compared to her other hormone driven

admirers.

“Let’s continue!” Zi Yan was determined to perfect the Triple Tidal Palm. effect

“Yea!” Looking at how undaunted Zi Yan appeared to be, Ye was affected by her vibe. Although Ye Wei didn’t know why she was being so stubborn, he decided to help her fulfil her wish.

Ye Wei continued guiding Zi Yan, but the team had many more failures, because Zi Yan, herself, was relatively new to performing stances, let alone mastering and perfecting the Triple Tidal Palm.

“Let’s try again. You can come closer, it’s okay!” Zi Yan lightly bit her lower lip, turned around and told Ye Wei in a soft tone.

“How much closer?” Ye Wei carefully took a half step forward, which brought his body just a hair away from Zi Yan’s back; he could clearly feel the warmth from her body rising towards his face.

Zi Yan’s fragrance lingered around Ye’s nose and his heart started racing again, but he was focused on the task at hand. ‘Zi Yan was about to make a mistake!’ he thought. His hand reacted quicker than any sound he could make to warn Zi Yan. With lightning, speed, he grabbed a hold of her delicate hand and saved the rune. The texture of Zi Yan’s skin was so soft and smooth, comforting Ye Wei as he continued guiding her.

Feeling the warmth from Ye Wei’s hand, Zi Yan’s face warmed up a little, but it took no time for her to regain focus and steadily release primal energy, flawlessly completing rune after rune.

Chapter 8 – Perfection, Quintuple Tidal Palm

His back and her chest were tightly affixed together, Ye Wei could feel Zi Yan's slightly curvy body, but he tried to ignore these sensations. He took a deep breath and focused on sketching the runes while holding her hand.

“Move that rune here, then erase these two, now sketch them over here instead!” Holding Miss Zi Yan’s hand, Ye Wei calmly helped her rearrange the runes.

“Nice!” Zi Yan nodded, concentrating on Ye Wei’s advice while rewriting and rearranging the runes. Still energized, Zi Yan’s primal energy was lingering around her fingertips. Guided by Ye Wei’s hand, her energy left trails and formed runes in the air.

The runes made a bell-like sound as they connected in an orderly fashion, forming a complete pattern. The pattern in front of Zi Yan suddenly came alive. The tidal pattern emitted rays of blinding azure light, all the walls in the house were painted blue.

The mystic stance was now completely perfected!

‘This is the best form Triple Tidal Palm can take!’ Feeling the stance had reached perfection, Ye Wei was brimming with satisfaction, causing him to finally smile.

Three roars erupted from the center of the bright light, together with the salty smell of the sea.

“It’s finished!” Zi Yan was overjoyed because after Ye Wei’s assistance, the runes connected much more smoothly; therefore, it was much easier to activate the new stance compared to the old one. In the battlefield, even a split second could be the difference between life and death. The shorter completion time of the new Tidal Palm increased the practicality of it in actual combat!

“Triple Tidal Palm was just an ordinary low Spirit level stance; even though it was perfected, sadly, it won’t be able to breakthrough into the mid level, but that doesn’t matter! Grandfather’s first stance has finally been perfected!”

“The family always wanted to refine this, but all our attempts have failed. I can’t believe Ye Wei perfected it so easily. The Qi flow is much more fluid now!” Zi Yan said as she appreciated the result, two more roars resounded from the epicentre of the bright light.

As the sound of the three waves reached Zi Yan and Ye Wei’s ears, two more waves of energy surged out.

“Was that five breaking waves I heard?!”

Zi Yan stared at the stance in disbelief, as though she was hallucinating. Her face displayed a shocked expression, as she slowly accepted the fact that she had just heard five roars instead of the usual three.

“This was no longer the Triple Tidal Palm... this is the Quintuple Tidal Palm!”

This is way more advanced than the Triple Tidal Palm and should be categorized as a mid Spirit level stance!

Ye Wei's refinement actually evolved the stance to the next level, a staggering achievement beyond belief!

As the energy of the stance faded, a dazzling pillar of white light appeared, descending from the sky. It shone down on Zi Yan. Bathing in the pillar of light, she looked angelic as the pores on her skin opened up, absorbing the cosmic power from the heavens.

Upgrading, perfecting, and creating a new stance triggered this phenomenon. Cosmic energy is used to improve one's Sentient and strength.

Cosmic energy is pure and compressed, similar to the energy the Sages harvested from Mystic Mount in ancient times. If one wanted to obtain the same amount of power that the cosmic energy gave to Zi Yan just now, it would take years by normal training.

Bang!

The cosmic energy entered Zi Yan's body, breaking through the final star-gate. With all ten star-gates open, Zi Yan had just became a Warrior!

Witnessing this scene, Ye Wei was startled as he felt the vast energy from the pillar of light. He was determined to create his own stances, to

gain cosmic energy and from it upgrade his Sentient!

If he could achieve that, he would no longer be a mere red Sentient trash.

The white light faded away slowly eventually dispersing into luminant dust and dissolving into the atmosphere.

Lin Zi Yan turned around and looked at Ye Wei. Her eyes showed complicated mixed feelings of shock, disbelief, and gratefulness.

Whoever still regarded Ye Wei as a trash could not be more incorrect. A thirteen year old who possessed soul sensibility strong enough to help evolve the Triple Tidal Palm! How could he be trash with such talent?!

Having displayed this level of soul sensitivity, it's almost certain Ye Wei can get a good Runemaster to study under and become one himself!

‘Ye Wei has been studying at South Star Academy for three years now; he wasted three whole years in a junior class! With his talent if he had a good tutor three years ago, then he could be taking the exam to become a Runemaster now!’

‘South Star could have produced a thirteen year old Runemaster! And now it's just a dream... I will find out who was responsible for his entrance exam and we are going to have a talk!’ Zi Yan got emotional as she pictured how South Star Academy missed out on a chance to make history.

Zi Yan with a solemn apologetic tone, expressed gratitude to Ye: “Ye Wei, you helped me perfect the Triple Tidal Palm and break through to Warrior level. I owe you a favour, so if you have any wishes, or if there is anything I can help you with just ask!” If Zi Yan had known Ye Wei’s capability, she would have given him this task of refinement long ago, as if he is an experienced Runemaster.

Ye Wei shrugged and smiled “Don’t mention it, it’s my pleasure!”. In his mind being so close to Zi Yan was the best reward he could have been given, and the experience was already engraved in his memory!

“Ye Wei were you treated unfairly when you took your entrance exam? If that was the case, I can consult the vice principal and see what went wrong when you were assigned to the class you’re in. We should seek justice!” Zi Yan couldn’t stop grinding her teeth. Her view of Ye Wei had completely changed at this point, he was a genius at birth and should have been assigned to gifted class and she was determined to help him get in.

“It’s okay, I think my soul sensitivity started improving two years ago!” Ye Wei answered quickly because he didn’t expect that Zi Yan could just meet the vice-principal whenever she wished to do so. Ye Wei didn’t want to cause trouble and technically he did not lie, as he knew the improvement was related to his dream from an hour ago.

“So that’s the case... I see!” Lin Zi Yan nodded, there are indeed many cases where students develop their sensibility over time as they train. A legend even stated that some people could gain soul sensitivity while they were dreaming. “Since that is the case, I will refer you to an extremely experienced Runemaster. He has a great reputation he built for himself over the years, so if you do become his apprentice I am sure you will get the guidance you need to become a great Runemaster!”

“Thank you Miss Zi Yan!” Upon hearing the news Ye Wei was overjoyed, as he expected his training would be much faster than ever before with the aid of a Runemaster.

“Drop the ‘Miss’! You’re like a brother to me now!” Zi Yan smiled at Ye Wei while her beautiful eyes transmitted sincerity.

“Thank you Zi Yan!” Ye Wei said with a little unwillingness.

Seeing how stiff and shy Ye Wei acted, Zi Yan chuckled: “Why don’t you head back and rest for now? I will go see the Runemaster now and will inform you if there is any news.”

“Yeah, okay, sounds good!” Ye Wei said to Zi Yan, waved goodbye and headed out.

He couldn’t stop thinking about how close he was to the school idol, Zi Yan. ‘ How great would it be if I can get this beautiful girl to be my girlfriend! However, she sees me as a little brother, sadly.’

Ye Wei realised the probability of them ending up a couple was very small. In the end, his academic achievements and family background were nothing compared to Zi Yan’s.

‘Oh well, there is still a sliver of hope. If I become a Runemaster in the future, I would definitely have a chance.’

Chapter 9 –Dragons Don’t Associate with Snakes

“There’s no way I could perform a stance before becoming a seven star Student. Then I could refine my stances or possibly create some. It would be great if I could get hold of some Quenching pills though...”

Ye Wei whispered to himself as he closed the door, exiting the small house into the courtyard.

Outside Zi Yan’s place lay a cobblestone path that led straight to the Green Phoenix Hall’s front gate. Trees blossomed on both sides of the pathway. They acted as vertical blinds, filtering the sunshine and projecting webs of shadows across the ground. While walking through the patches of light, Ye Wei thought about today’s life-altering events.

He visited the Mystic Mountain in his dream and obtained a treasure trove of knowledge on runes, yet he still remained a one star Student with his unchanging red Sentient.

Having enough Qi and Primal energy to perform a stance, which was the basis of harvesting cosmic energy through refinement or stance creation, required a seven star cultivation. There was nothing more important than training right this moment for Ye Wei.

Cosmic energy could only benefit whoever performed the stance refinement or creation, which would ultimately cleanse and transform his or her Sentient.

Talent in physique and combat were crucial to one’s rapid

improvement. In Ye Wei's case, where he lacked both, he would surely need some Quenching concoction to quicken his training!

‘I shall breakthrough to two star level. One step at a time!’

While walking gracefully on the cobblestone path, Ye Wei fist pumped and promised to train harder.

‘I will soon become as strong as my cousin Ye Zhong, and become the pride of my family! It was just an impossible dream... but now I know it could become reality! With all the knowledge in my head, it is entirely possible!’

Ye Wei was filled head to toe with positivity and confidence like never before.

‘From one star to two... Body strength should be my main focus!’

‘The most direct and simple way to improve my body strength is to nurture it with primal energy. But it's hard and slow for me to absorb primal energy from nature due to my limited talent. I would need at least six months to get to two stars!’

‘But if I can somehow get enough Quenching pills, it should only take around two weeks for two stars!’

Though Ye Wei was quite determined, the Ye family had limited resources, which were usually spent on more talented family members.

He understood the family's practice. If he were the head of the family, he too would distribute the resources all the same. Therefore, he was well aware that getting goods comes up to himself and his connections.

When Ye Wei reached the gate of Green Phoenix Hall, the sun was already half sunken under the skyline, painting the sky red. It was already time for students to return to their dormitories.

As Ye Wei exited Green Phoenix Hall, more students stared at him again. This time, however, they were Green Phoenix girls, who were pointing and gossiping.

“What is this boy doing at a female hall?”

“Who is that? I've never seen his face before. He doesn't look like he's from Crouching Dragon Hall... Is one of our girls getting another pathetic admirer?”

“There are too many daydreaming romantics in this world!”

“He isn't from Crouching Dragon Hall. What is he doing here?”

The harsh words did not escape Ye Wei's ears; he raised his eyebrows slightly but didn't talk back.

Three years of listening to scathing comments and criticism... What he heard now could only be mild, and he could dismiss them rather easily.

He had learned to be thankful to the critics and bullies who strengthened his mind.

“Ye Wei? Why are you here?”

Out of the blue was a familiar voice that startled him, and his face went pale in a matter of seconds. Ye Wei unwillingly turned around, casting his eyes towards the source of the voice.

He was looking at a teenage girl in a red leather dress and standing in a pair of silver long boots. Her shiny black hair fell over her ears, giving off a young and energetic vibe. Her friends convinced her to talk to Ye Wei.

Her name was Joe Yin, and she was once close to Ye Wei!

“I’m waiting for a friend, this visit has nothing to do with you!” Ye Wei made up an excuse. He was triggered by her presence, though, and his eye twitched slightly. He took a deep breath and stared at her coldly.

“You? Waiting for a friend outside Green Phoenix Hall? Joe Yin chuckled and looked at Ye Wei with a sarcastic smile like as if she just heard a good joke.

The Joes and the Ye’s were very close, and the two families often invited each other over. Ye Wei and Joe Yin had known each other since they were toddlers because of this. They were the same age; with Ye Wei being slightly older, however, he always took care of Joe Yin as if she were his own little sister. They were like two peas in a pod and quite fond

of each other.

In the entry exam, Ye Wei was told he had a red Sentient and Joe Yin, green. With that kind of talent, Joe Yin's cultivation skyrocketed and got herself into the intermediate class, while Ye Wei got stuck at one star level, sitting in the junior class.

Joe Yin would forever be like a little sister to Ye Wei. Even after reaching six stars, getting herself into the intermediate class and a place to live in Green Phoenix Hall, the mental image of a snot-nosed crying little sister who was always clinging onto him did not fade.

Ye Wei thought Joe Yin still needed his babysitting!

Half a year ago, right before Joe Yin was about to move to Green Phoenix, Ye Wei enthusiastically went to help her pack. However, he didn't even get a thank you.

“Dragons don’t associate with snakes.” For Ye Wei, it wasn’t just a rough insult—it was disapproval and betrayal from the person closest to him. Those five words were like sharp nails buried deeply into his heart. That was when Ye Wei realised Joe Yin grew up and changed; in the real world, you would be despised by everyone unless you are feared!

In Joe Yin’s mind, being associated with Ye Wei was shameful. Even being seen talking to him for a minute would look bad!

“Ye Wei, right? Stop daydreaming, you and Joe Yin are literally in different worlds!”

“Joe Yin is going to breakthrough to seven stars and will become a Warrior in around two years, at most. How about you? One star in three years? Now that’s a feat!”

“You? Waiting for a friend? Can you not read? It reads Green Phoenix Hall on the gate! The elites who live here are way out of your league!”

“Why don’t you look into a mirror? And tell me what you see?”

The girls around Joe Yin were riding on their high horses, looking down on Ye Wei and giving their all to insult him.

Ye Wei was trying his hardest to keep his cool from all this poisonous hatred. His face became paler and paler, his nails dug into his palm and his clenched fists colored his knuckles white.

Ye Wei slowly raised his head while grinding his teeth. His black eyes held a cold aura as they passed over everyone before finally resting upon Joe Yin. He never wanted anything from Joe Yin. He only gave and gave selflessly, but never did he think that all he would receive in return was ice-cold mockery!

Who was this person who looked like Joe Yin?

People change!

‘You can count on people as much as you can count on putting out fire

with paper!'

'You must only believe in yourself. Only by gaining strength would one receive respect from others... not when you are weak!'

Ye Wei tried his best to learn something, making what good he could from this mess, and this thought is what he came up with.

Ignoring Joe Yin and all the insults, Ye Wei kept his cool and walked away.

"Ye Wei, don't come again. We live in different worlds. I couldn't have explained myself any better than that day—dragons don't associate with snakes! I don't want to be seen with you!" Joe Yin said while staring at Ye Wei's back as he walked away, cutting all ties.

Chapter 10 – Fiery Sun Quencher

From a certain distance, an elegant and beautiful teenager observed the whole violent verbal exchange. It was Lin Zi Yan!

Her glossy purple hair was resting on her shoulders and the white slim fit dress emphasized her curves in contrast to the thin profile of her body. While her neck and collarbones were gracefully and seductively exposed through the opening of the dress, which was framed by the embellished collar on her dress. There was even a stylish purple flower embroidered on the dress, sitting right next to the bulge on her chest.

Zi Yan saw Ye Wei slowly walking away from Green Phoenix Hall. She could see from Ye Wei's posture that he felt lonely and frustrated because of what just took place between Joe Yin and him. The distant look on Ye Wei's face caused a throbbing pain somewhere in Zi Yan's heart.

But there was not even a hint of rage on his face. Ye Wei always held rage back like a dormant volcano that would never erupt.

Lin Zi Yan couldn't imagine how much mockery and pressure he had received from his peers and teachers; that on top of the sadness in his heart due to his poor performance in class and being a red Sentient one star Student, who was constantly told he would never be worth anything other than trash. Even now with his new found soul sensibility, he still distanced himself from the world because he didn't have enough confidence to stand on his own two feet and talk back to people.

Like a hedgehog, Ye Wei faced obstacles in the fetal position, passively

protecting himself from the world.

While looking at the lonely figure of Ye Wei getting smaller and smaller as he walked away, Zi Yan imagined the solitude he had experienced for all these years and tried to empathize with him.

“Ye Wei, where are you heading off to? Let’s go together!” Zi Yan called out to Ye Wei, with a uplifting smile on her face as she suggested casually. She quickly walked towards Ye Wei, with her dress flying in the wind of the summer breeze, causing her to look like an angel that descended from the heavens.

Beauty is subjective and relative. Joe Yin and her friends were good-looking academic achievers, but when Zi Yan came into sight, it was akin to watching a swan arriving near a flock of ducks.

Every time Joe Yin and her friends saw Zi Yan, they would start comparing themselves and become ashamed. When it came to family, wealth, looks, and talent the gap between them and Zi Yan was simply too vast. They didn’t even have the the courage to socialize with her. They preferred hanging out in their shared dormitories, whereas the private houses were out of their league!

‘Who did Lin Zi Yan just talk to? Are my ears deceiving me?’ Joe Yin’s eyes widened in disbelief as Zi Yan walked towards Ye Wei.

He came to Green Phoenix Hall for Lin Zi Yan!

But how did he even know her? They were from different worlds. One

was trash that lived on the earth, while the other was a star that was only fit to belong in the heavens, themselves!

Hearing Zi Yan's call, Ye Wei turned around with a startled look on his face. He mumbled softly "Mm... Sister Zi Yan..." He had almost forgotten to drop the 'Miss'.

"I have to go to the Runemaster Union and we'll be taking the same way, so let's walk together!" Lin Zi Yan smiled and said this casually. She looked around, coldly setting her eyes onto Joe Yin and her friends and started frowning: "Who are these people? Ye Wei, I don't think you should waste time talking to these nobodies! There are a lot of commoners who are not worthy of our attention at this academy. You should simply ignore them."

After processing what Zi Yan had just said, the faces of Joe Yin and her friends had a pale complexion. All of them were bitterly thinking the same thing 'Are we really unworthy commoners in her eyes?!"

Like a rock falling onto thin glass, Joe Yin's conceited nature was instantly shattered by Zi Yan's words. In Joe Yin's head, Zi Yan had so many great qualities that she was someone Joe Yin idolized and wished to be someday.

Although Joe Yin was already a six star Student, Zi Yan was out of her league in status and strength.

Joe Yin could not even understand why her idol, Lin Zi Yan, was with trash like Ye Wei and was even supporting him. She ground her teeth, though she was offended by Lin Zi Yan Joe Yin didn't have to courage to

talk back because she was well aware that if Zi Yan said anything it could be the ruin of the Joe family!

As Ye Wei assessed the situation he could not resist giving Zi Yan a thankful look, having realised she was getting the girls back for what they had just said.

“Let’s go!” Zi Yan smiled merrily and casually held Ye Wei’s hand.

Sensing Zi Yan’s soft breast on his arm, Ye Wei felt slightly cramped. He stood tall and stopped looking at Joe Yin, as he set off with Zi Yan.

“How does Miss Zi Yan know Ye Wei?” A tall slim girl was confused and therefore asked a couple of questions after Ye Wei and Zi Yan had walked past “They looked really close, their relationship might not be simple!”

“I just heard Ye Wei calling Miss Zi Yan by her last name!” A round faced girl said in surprise.

“If I’m not mistaken, that is Ye Wei, a boy with red Sentient. How come Miss Zi Yan is speaking to him?” The tall girl said after thinking it through. ‘I have never seen Lin Zi Yan this close to a boy, maybe they are dating?’

Seeing Ye Wei and Zi Yan slowly disappearing in the distance, Joe Yin’s lips started bleeding from extensive biting, as she thought about what she said to Ye. ‘Dragons don’t associate with snakes’, Ironically would be a perfect summation of her situation and that phrase she had

previously spoke made her feel as if someone stabbed her heart with a dagger!

Now Joe Yin knew she did not know who Ye Wei was anymore. She believed Ye Wei would not ever talk back to her, because he was defenseless and pathetic, but now Joe Yin realized he just could not be bothered to waste energy talking back to someone unworthy!

Lin Zi Yan turned and glanced at Joe Yin and cleared her throat. 'Ye Wei has the sharpest soul sensitivity I have ever seen. I am one hundred percent certain he can become a Runemaster'

Just like that, Zi Yan kept holding onto Ye Wei's arm and together they exited Green Phoenix Hall stepping onto the gravel trail leaving the speechless Joe Yin and her friends behind.

The sun had now set and it is rush hour in Green Moon City and the path was packed full of people. After making sure they were out of Joe Yin's sight, Zi Yan let go of Ye Wei's arm and she blushed a little in an adorable way.

"Zi Yan, thanks!" Ye Wei looked at the beauty in front of him and said sincerely.

Of course Ye Wei wouldn't assume that Miss Zi Yan fancies him; he is clear that arm holding stunt was just an act to build up his image and gain respect from the girls, an act to help him!

After going through so much, Ye Wei started to have feelings and

affection for Lin Zi Yan, as a brilliant and kind girl is irresistible to most boys after all.

But for now Ye Wei knew that Zi Yan and him would never work and therefore stopped thinking too much about it.

“Don’t mention it. I told you you’re like my little brother now!” Lin Zi Yan smiled playfully, looking at Ye Wei’s well-proportioned face and remembering the moment when he perfected the Triple Tidal Palm, she was still a bit shocked.

Ye Wei’s eyes were set on Zi Yan’s charming looks, spacing out.

Neither of them talked and the atmosphere became a little ambiguous and awkward.

“Oh yea Ye Wei, I have some Fiery Sun Quencher pills here take them and put them to good use!” Lin Zi Yan took out a jade bottle from her pocket and passed it to Ye Wei. Giving him these pills was one of the reason she went to catch up to Ye Wei at the gate.

“Fiery Sun Quencher pills?” Ye Wei was startled, there are a wide variety of quenching pills, and Fiery Sun Quencher was amongst the most effective and valuable pills that could be concocted. In the Ye Family, only Wei’s cousin Ye Zhong was deemed worthy enough to get a few Fiery Sun pills.

Ye Wei stopped spacing out and started panicking a little “Miss Zi Yan, this is too valuable, I can’t take this!”

“You deserve it, you perfected Triple Tidal Palm with me and helped me become a Warrior, do you really think that is worth less than a few Fiery Sun Quencher pills? Lin Zi Yan played along pretending to be serious when she said it.

Chapter 11 – Two Star Student

If it was a cheaper quencher pill, like Bone Strengthener, Ye Wei could have accepted it easily, but the Fiery Sun Quencher was way too valuable!

One pill cost five hundred silver, and the bottle Zi Yan passed to Ye Wei contained ten pills. That is five thousand silver worth of Fiery Sun Quencher pills!

One might not know how much five thousand silver is.

The Ye Family was not a small family in Green Moon City, yet Ye Wei's monthly allowance was twenty silver and around thirty silver is enough to feed a family well for a month.

Lin Zi Yan was very wealthy, Ye Wei knew Zi Yan wasn't an ordinary girl, but he never anticipated her to be this wealthy.

“Accept it as a reward for what you've done for me!” Afraid she was going to hurt Ye Wei's pride with such a big gift, Zi Yan tried to make it easier for him saying it was a reward.

Ye Wei paused and thought about it “I will take one then!”

“You are my brother now, and you're not going to take what your sister is giving you? Do you despise me?”

“...Okay then.” Ye Wei nodded and took Zi Yan’s gift, his heart was filled with gratitude as these Fiery Sun Quencher pills are exactly what he needs right now.

“Good!” Zi Yan stopped her tough act and smiled as she pulled Ye Wei on his shoulders and said: “Let’s go!”

For unknown reasons, for Zi Yan there is something making her gravitate toward Ye Wei, the distance between them had shortened within the span of a few hours.

“If you have any problems, you can come directly to me with them, you know where I live at in Green Phoenix now. I will head towards Master Yi now.” Zi Yan said her farewell with a big smile on her face as they reached a crossroad.

“Ok.” Ye Wei nodded

Lin Zi Yan’s graceful figure slowly became smaller and eventually disappeared along the side path.

“Thanks you so much for the Fiery Sun Quencher pills I, Ye Wei will remember this favour!” Ye Wei held the jade bottle tightly, mumbling to himself. He was very quiet but at the same time hard as metal; he was determine to make something happen with these pills.

The last beam of sunlight faded as evening progressed into night time as Ye Wei returned to his dorm. South Star Academy is the cradle of future fighters and they even provide dorm rooms for the worst students.

His room was very minimalistic, there was a bland wooden table in the middle of the room and against the wall was a plank of wood on legs he called a bed, sadly there was not even a chair in the room. The door let out a loud squeak when Ye Wei closed it tightly; he then took off his shoes and sat on the bed in a lotus position with his back against the wall.

“With these Fiery Sun Quencher pills, I should be able to breakthrough to two stars soon!”

Ye Wei took out the bottle of Quencher pills, he was a bit nervous and breathed a bit quicker than usual. Nearly all of the students who were admitted the same time as Ye Wei three years ago made decent progress and are now in the intermediate class, and even a few talented ones are in the senior class.

“I am very far behind right now but once I get to the seven star level, I will be able to catch up in no time! Ye Wei fiercely shook his fists, feeling confident with his game plan.

Ye Wei opened the jade bottle and poured out one pill. He sat still and saw what five hundred silver looked like, then he took a deep breath and swallowed the pill.

Hiss!

The pill immediately melted upon touching Ye Wei’s tongue, a scorching wave of energy flowed through his body turning his skin bright red all over, he looked almost like a piece of glowing coal.

Ye Wei's skin and muscles were drenched with the surge of energy, as it tempered his skin and muscles, and strengthened his body. He was visibly getting bigger.

He sat there absorbing the vast amount of energy from the pill.

A whole 10 hours passed and the sky was brightening up starting to turn red and getting ready for a new day. It wasn't until then that Ye Wei absorbed everything from the pill.

"That was strong! I got more from this one pill than I did from at least three months worth of training!" Still sitting in a lotus position on the plank of wood, Ye Wei opened his eyes leisurely looking slightly childish as he couldn't hide the joy and satisfaction from his result.

"With this speed I will breakthrough in no time!"

Ye Wei made fists with both hands as he felt his strength and energy surging. His lips curled up and displayed great satisfaction. Being one star ranked for three years was not glorifying, but it did give Ye Wei a good foundation to develop on. Now that he took one of the best Quenching pills, it's very possible that he would breaks through in the matter of days.

Furthermore, Ye Wei was surprised as he discovered how his physique had changed a bit after his dream yesterday during the lecture.

"I will breakthrough before returning home that ought to surprise my

parents!" Ye Wei's astounding dark eyes shone bright in the early dawn light.

The Ye Wei of the past could never dare to imagine his training could go this fast, but with the recent changes to his body and the acquisition of the Fiery Sun Quencher pills, Ye Wei knew he stood a fighting chance of improving rapidly.

Two stars was nothing, but to breakthrough with Ye Wei's red Sentient, now that was not a simple task at all!

"Without strength nobody will notice nor respect me. One day i will become a great fearsome Warrior!" Remembering the mockery he got from Joe Yin and her friends, Ye Wei held his fist tight, his veins bulging.

There are many factors that determine how strong a Warrior is, their foundation is based on cultivation and stance performance, but putting aside stance performance as it is a non-factor before seven stars, the greater one's cultivation is the more primal energy and Qi one has to use; also how fast one can cultivate is determined by Sentient and Formula usage.

The Sentient spectrum is divided like this: red, orange, yellow, green, lime, blue, and violet; with red being the weakest and violet the strongest.

The stronger one's Sentient is the quicker they are able to absorb primal energy from their natural surroundings.

Whereas formulas purify and convert the primal energy we absorb into a storable form like a transformer. Primal energy is a violent energy and if it is not purified and converted it will do more harm than benefit to the body.

Like stances, formulas are also divided in five ranks: Spirit, Myst, Earth, Sky, and Heaven. With the low, mid, and high, three levels per rank.

To fill his body to the brim with primal energy, Ye Wei's red Sentient needs to work non-stop for around a day when the norm is usually around six to ten hours.

Though Ye Wei's formula is not shabby, the mid Myst level Falling Star Form was passed down in the Ye family through generations. And it does a good job purifying primal energy at a reasonable speed.

The only thing that was holding Ye Wei back was his Sentient!

The distance between Ye Wei and other students his age just became greater over time, as his rate of cultivating was much slower than others. Without resources and enough Qi to support his training his body simply could not keep up.

Chapter 12 – Perfect Falling Star

“These next three days I am not going to lectures, I’m going to lock myself up and focus on training!”

Ye Wei got up and did his stretching routine after getting off his bed, then he started training after washing up.

“Time to use the Falling Star formula!”

Moments later, Ye Wei returned to sitting on the bed and he crossed his legs into a lotus position. He closed his eyes and adjust the speed of his breathing distancing himself from the world and slowly entered a zen state.

Ye Wei’s hands formed a complex hand seal in front of his chest, with the formula operating his will-force slowly formed a vortex with the epicenter in between his eyebrows, as the suction drew in thin threads of primal energy from every direction.

The primal energy got stuck onto the will-force and then was stored in Ye Wei’s dantian. Now the energy was ready to be purified by the Falling Star form!

An entire day passed and Ye Wei’s dantian was finally fully saturated, the speed of his absorption being outrageously slow. Ye Wei opened his eyes wide when the last bit of space in his dantain was filled. One could see a glimmer of silver deep inside Ye Wei’s eyes and as he formed the thirty-six different hand seals, the raging primal energy finally started to

be tamed and purified.

Suddenly, Ye Wei heard a noise inside his head.

It came out of nowhere while Ye Wei was purifying primal energy with the Falling Star form. The loud cracking noise resembled thunder rumbling, he also saw an image of a towering mountain, the mountain covered in hundreds of thousands of mystic runes, the runes seeming to have a life of their own, crawling on the mountain's surface. Out of nowhere appeared a spectral being, revealing itself on the mountain.

His translucent figure allowed the spectral being's meridian network, a beautiful web of green and red to be visible!

Ye Wei was stunned by the fact that the mountain revisited him, but something else caught his attention. The being was sitting down, in a lotus position, seemingly in the process of purifying primal energy with a formula and his green and red meridian network was vibrating slightly. Ye Wei could clearly see the energy, silver in colour, circling the network.

“Is this... Falling Star form?!”

Ye Wei recognised the route of primal energy circulation and it was very similar to the Falling Star form he was using at that moment, but the spectral being's version was far more complex!

The Ye family's Falling Star form utilized thirty-six meridians, while this unknown being's silver energy was circulating through a hundred and eight meridians, forming a perfect cycle.

All the energy stored in its dantian was purified within only one cycle!

In contrast Ye Wei's Falling Star form takes at least 9 cycles to purify a full dantian. The silver energy passed through more meridians inside the spectral being's system and it was passing through with twice the speed compared to Ye Wei's form.

'Our Ye family has always used the mid Myst level Falling Star form, and its speed is way slower than this spectral being's form though they are similar, is he using a high Myst level formula?'

Deep in thought, Ye Wei was startled by this revelation. Being a Ye who is used to the Falling Star form, he knows exactly what a high Myst level formula could help him achieve.

A high Myst level formula can purify the same amount of primal energy three times as quick as a mid Myst level formula; putting Ye Wei's horrendous energy absorption speed into account, if the purification process is sped up three times, training should be twice as efficient.

To be twice as efficient...

Wei's cousin Ye Zhong is a twenty-two years old four star Warrior. With Zhong's talent, he will need two or three years of non stop training in order to breakthrough, but with the spectral being's Falling Star form he would only need a bit more than a year to become a five Star Warrior!

A twenty-three year old five star Warrior is quite a feat and that would

make him one of the strongest young talents in Green Moon City.

Moreover, there are no more than five families in all of Green Moon City that have a high Myst level formula. Say the Ye family started utilising this version of the Falling Star form, then his family's status would be on a totally different level.

The spectral being circulated his energy 3 times around his meridians. Ye Wei watched and memorised every hand seal used and the circulation route, the information was accurately imprinted onto his mind.

“Om!”

Still sitting in a lotus position on his bed, Ye Wei's head buzzed and his body shook as he instantaneously opened his eyes.

“Zooom!”

Ye Wei's hands made seal after seal and it took him no time to form the hundred and eight seals, he accomplished it so fast that only a blurry afterimage was visible. The primal energy flowed swiftly from his dantian to the rest of his body through the hundred and eight meridians at an incredible speed.

Two hours. In just two hours, a dantian full of raging energy was converted to pure and usable primal energy, Qi. And the purification process was working at twice the speed of before after adopting the new formula!

‘The legend must be true... There once was a Supreme within Ye’s bloodline and the Falling Star form that was passed down from him was obviously incomplete. It makes sense now that I have seen this version of the Falling Stars form!’

‘Well i’m not sure if the Supreme was real, but at least the formula bit of the story holds is!’

‘So a spectral being who resides on a mountain in my consciousness showed me the perfect Falling Star form, and basically gave our family a high Myst level formula!’

Ye Wei’s eyes were shining as he was surprised by the experience and overjoyed... His facial expression twisted a bit from being overwhelmed by all the emotions, but it was obvious he was very happy.

Improving the Falling Star form means the world to Ye Wei and the Ye family!

Inhale, exhale... It took quite a bit of time and many deep breaths before Ye Wei’s emotions subsided and he regained his calmness.

“My body is as strong as a one star Student’s can get and tomorrow I should be able to break through to two stars without the aid of these Fiery Sun Quencher pills!”

Ye Wei started his training again after mumbling to himself.

In the morning of his third day training, as the sun was glaring

intensely a few drops of the golden sunshine landed on Ye Wei's slightly childish face. He opened his eyes slowly and made a fist.

“Booom!”

He threw a punch to the air fiercely, the sound of wind breaking around his fist was sharp and loud. Ye Wei was more than satisfied and he was surprised by the immense strength behind the punch.

“So this is what it feels like being a two star Student?” The corners of Ye Wei’s eyes were slightly wet. It had been three whole years since he started at South Star Academy and this moment marked the end of an era. The era of Ye Wei, the one star Student who was stuck at the one star level for three years!

All the good news aside, the changes in one’s body condition was not exactly significant until a Student reaches five stars. When a Student reaches five stars, their skin and muscle will become hard as iron which drastically improves their speed and strength by ten fold!

“Dad, mom, I broke through! Your child is a two star Student!” Ye Wei looked towards the direction of his home as his tears slowly left a warm reflective trail on his face.

No one can really empathise with Ye Wei, as the three years of struggle was very personal experience for him.

“I need to go home!”

Ye Wei can not wait to bring home the good news to his parents and his cousin Ye Zhong, who took care of him since before he could remember. He had skipped his lectures for two days already, what would one more day matter?

He packed light and hid the jade bottle of Fiery Sun Quenchers in a secret pocket in front of his chest. He closed the door behind him as he left his room and headed towards the school gate.

It was early morning and the students were already in the classroom and nobody was wandering around on the campus even though most tutors in South Star Academy were not very strict.

Facing the sun, Ye Wei walked out of the school gate on his way home.

Chapter 13 – The Du Family

South Star Academy was located in the north-eastern corner of Green Moon City, whereas the Ye family Manor was positioned in the south-western corner. They are pretty much on the opposite side of town.

Although Ye Wei is now a two star Student with enhanced strength and speed compared to ordinary folk, it would still take around ten hours for him to get to the family manor on foot.

In Green Moon City, the three most popular means of transport were as follow: ordinary horse carriages, for a more expensive option one could use the beast carriages, and the most prestigious way to travel would be by runicles!

A normal horse carriage cost around one to three thousand silver, beast carriage around thirty to fifty thousand silver, but runicles are a bit special because you can't pay for their service.

Runicles are not pulled by horses or beasts. They are vehicles forged by rare metals, which were then engraved by Runemasters. The runes engraved onto the runicle draws primal energy from the sky and the earth, which powers it. Not only are runicles speedy, they also ride extremely stable, and runicle owners in Green Moon City could be counted with one hand.

The Ye family's chosen means of transport is a green-maned unicorn carriage worth forty thousand silver. Green-maned unicorns are a hybrid species, they are cross bred between unicorns and green-maned horses.

In green-maned unicorns the green-maned horse's genes in the hybrid hinders the unicorn beast's violent nature, while its endurance and strength was retained. It was an entry-level beast for a carriage.

Ye Wei walked down the road with only himself for company, the scorching sun shone down sunlight and caused droplets of sweat to appear on his face. From time to time there were horse and beast carriages passing by. And then he saw a runicle, which pedestrians and carriages gave way to.

“One day, I will ride in a runicle!” Ye Wei whispered slightly envious.

Of course it was just a daydream now, as Ye Wei has not even traveled in the family beast carriage let alone him being able to ride in a runicle.

It was a balmy summer day, the temperature abnormally high and sadly with Ye Wei's two star cultivation, he couldn't even expel the heat out of his body with Qi, all he could do was grind his teeth and tolerate it. But thinking about seeing his family again put a smile on his childish face and made the hot conditions just a bit more tolerable.

By the time the sun started setting in the west Ye Wei had covered more than half of his journey. Meanwhile back at South Star Academy the school bell rang loud and clear. It was the end of school day and the midterm and South Star Academy students get a seven day break every three months.

As the bell rang, South Star Academy went from peaceful to hectic in an instant. Junior, intermediate, senior, and the one and only class of the gifted all came alive as students left the classrooms quickly heading out

one after another to enjoy their break.

In the junior three classroom where the teacher just left, a group of senior students with overwhelming energy presence blocked the classroom door, the weakest being an eight star Student, and the alpha of the group who was dressed in a white robe was a very powerful and young individual, he was a Warrior!

The white robed youngster was Du Ming Ze, the strongest student in senior five, the fifteenth strongest student in whole of South Star Academy! And also at the same time an avid admirer of Lin Zi Yan!

Rumours of the of Ye Wei and Zi Yan's little venture has spread through every corner of South Star Academy, about how they were together at Green Phoenix Hall and how they were linking arms and holding hands.

This pack of Zi Yan's fanatic admirers were provoked like piranhas that just picked up the scent of blood, they didn't even rest until they had found out everything related to Ye Wei's identity. And three days was more than enough time for the admirers to gather every gritty detail from people around campus.

“I am here to see Ye Wei, everyone else... leave!”

The group of senior students surrounded the white robed youth like they were bodyguards, his ice-cold eyes emotionlessly scanned through the faces of everyone in junior three.

“He is Du Ming Ze! The Du Ming Ze who is ranked fifteen on the South Star standings!”

“Leave the room! Just get out!”

“He is looking for Ye Wei? This time he is surely done for... How did he get into trouble with Du Ming Ze? Ming Ze is a Warrior! And the Du family is one of the three families, they basically run Green Moon City!”

“Even if Ye Wei has the talent to become a Runemaster, talent is just talent before he actually becomes a Runemaster, he can’t handle the Du family!”

Junior three students with bottomless respect looked at the youth in a white robe, and they started to sympathize with Ye Wei. They quieted down as the tension in the classroom built up. One by one, avoiding the middle of the room where Du Ming Ze stood the students almost held their breaths when exiting the room without making a sound.

‘Hahaha! Ye Wei, who will save you this time!?’

Xiao Qi appeared to be calm and collected, but he was bursting out in laughter inside.

Since Ye Wei displayed his potentials of becoming a Runemaster and turned his image upside down, Xiao Qi, even being the top student of junior three had no leverage to mess with Ye Wei. During these few days Xiao Qi had been frustrated and felt an extreme level of unease. Seeing Du Ming Ze here looking for trouble with Ye Wei soothed his need for

revenge!

‘But Ye Wei had not attended any classes for three days, is that lucky guy going to get away with it...’ Xiao Qi looked at the empty chair Ye Wei usually sat in, shaking his head in regret.

‘Ye Wei must be in his dorm room!’ Xiao Qi’s eyeballs spun around slowly and made a guess.

While a student is purifying primal energy, it’s a written rule in South Star Academy that the student shall not be disturbed by anyone under any circumstances, not other students, not any member of staff. This is one of the main reason Xiao Qi assumed Ye Wei was training in his dorm room.

Moments after the class evacuated, Xiao Qi was left alone. Being the only junior in junior three that was left in the classroom!

“So you’re Ye Wei?” The white robed Du Ming Ze’s facial expression resembles a restless untamed mustang, as he posed the question in a chilling tone, his dark eyes looked like a merciless predator’s.

“No no no! Ming Ze, brother, I am Xiao Qi, son of the senior five tutor Xiao Han Ji. I stayed here wanting to tell you that he hasn’t shown up for lectures, I think he is hiding in his dorm room and I know where that is!”

Facing the ice-cold Du Ming Ze, Xiao Qi brown nosed without hesitation.

“Tutor Xiao’s son?”

Du Ming Ze softened a little as he heard the familiar name, he is the proud understudy of senior five’s tutor Xiao.

“So when Miss Zi Yan was substituting for our class, not only did that bastard Ye Wei sleep through half of her lecture, he screamed and shouted when he woke up. He angered Miss Zi Yan and towards the end of lecture he criticised Miss Zi Yan’s stance, saying it was flawed and embarrassing her in front of the whole class. I never liked that kid! If he didn’t show the potential to be a Runemaster...”

Xiao Qi walked close to Du Ming Ze as he trashed talked and made Ye Wei sound as bad as possible. He stopped the moment he realised he shouldn’t say anything about Ye Wei’s shocking display.

It’s common knowledge the Du family was one of the ‘Big Three’ in Green Moon City. What Xiao Qi didn’t know, however was that the Du family’s willingness to provoke potential Runemasters. It would be against Xiao Qi’s interest if Ming Ze refused to mess with Ye Wei because of the Du family wanting to befriend upcoming Runemasters. Xiao Qi realised he said too much, and he was now looking for ways to explain himself.

“Little Xiao Qi, I don’t like people who are indirect and I also dislike hearing half a sentence!”

Du Ming Ze looked at Xiao Qi, his thick sword-shaped eyebrows were dark as black ink, they tilted up slightly showing Xiao Qi he was not

pleased with the partial truth he was told. The presence only a Warrior has pressed down onto Xiao Qi like a forcefield.

Xiao Qi was finding it hard to breath against the mountain like presence of Du ming Ze, he actually got knocked off balance and had to take a few steps back, before he could regain his balance and stand up straight. His body covered with cold sweat, Xiao Qi casted his eyes on Ming Ze with utmost respect.

“Ming Ze, brother, Ye Wei acquired knowledge about runes from god knows where, and answered a few question in Miss Zi Yan’s lecture correctly which made her think he had the talent to become a Runemaster. Then Miss Zi Yan took him away from the classroom after the lecture. That’s.. that’s all I know. If you want to get to Ye Wei’s dorm room, though I can show you the way there!” Xiao Qi said carefully and tried to avoid eye contact with Du ming Ze, “It’s school break now and nobody will be guarding the residence halls!” Xiao Qi added.

“Lead the way!” Du Ming Ze was satisfied from what he heard for the time being, he nodded and walked up next to Xiao Qi patting his shoulders: “If anyone is looking for trouble with you in South Star Academy, you can drop my name anytime you want!” Du Ming Ze expressed his appreciation towards the helpfulness of tutor Xiao’s son.

“Thank you”

Xiao Qi was flattered and he nodded. Although both Xiao’s parents were tutors at South Star it is an inconvenience for tutors to interfere and take sides in disputes between students. Not only is Du Ming Ze a direct Du descendant, he is also a Warrior and the fifteenth strongest person on the South Star rankings, there was no better patron than Du Ming Ze.

While having these thought and being proud of his new connection, Xiao Qi led Ming Ze and his gang to Ye Wei's room.

“Here we are!”

Xiao Qi pointed at a shut door after they entered the building and said excitedly.

Du Ming Ze didn't say a word he just nodded. With his eyes, he signaled the gang of senior students to break and enter, the act was prohibited in South Star Academy but the residence halls was not staffed today due to the break, the place was basically unmonitored!

Bang!

The tall and sturdily built eight star Student stepped forward towards Ye Wei's room, he punched the door ferociously with his enormous fist.

Boom!!

The door split open with a muffled rumble. There was nobody inside and there was nothing in the tight space except a wooden bed and a simple wooden table.

“He's not here?”

Xiao Qi was dumbfounded by the fact that Ye Wei was not in his room!

“Break them!”

Du Ming Ze said furiously, he stared at the empty room with a gloomy face.

“Yea!”

Without hesitation, the gang of seniors initiated the destructive act. There wasn't much to wreck in the room and it only took them seconds to turn everything into ruins.

Despite this Du Ming Ze was still not satisfied by the poor state of Ye Wei's room and he commanded everyone to piss on Ye Wei's bedding before he led them out of the room.

Chapter 14 – The Ye Family

After trashing Ye Wei's room and emptying themselves, Du Ming Ze and his gang left Ye Wei's room behind.

A few hours later, Ye Wei finally arrived at the Ye Manor's front gate after walking through the streets that were lit up by starlightt.

The Ye family was not quite that known in Green Moon City, but they were relatively well established in the southwestern district as their manor encompassed ten acres of bright and open land. The blood-red wooden gate was adorned with two well polished copper ring handles. Two grand marble lion statues decorated each side of the gate and standing in front were four sharp looking guards dressed in fancy uniforms.

To regular citizens, the Ye manor looked grand and majestic, but to Ye Wei it did not. He frowned in confusion as he looked at the four guards.

“Ehm, Why are there only four guards guarding the gate?”

Social status was very important for most families, and the strength, or more importantly the quantity, of guards symbolized the power and influence a family held; it was a show of vanity, after all.. ‘Usually there are eight four star Students guarding the gates. Why are there only four guards today?’

“Master Ye Wei!” They all called out.

The guards bowed and greeted the young master of the household. Ye Wei nodded back, wondering what happened to the rest of the guards as he headed towards the courtyard.

He stopped, however, when he overheard a loud conversation whilst entering the courtyard.

“Fu Shun, why is he only getting fifty silver? Our little Ye Wei is living and studying at South Star Academy, how could fifty silver possibly be enough? Don’t we normally send him a hundred and fifty silver? Why are we only giving him one third of what he usually receives?”

“Madame, truth be told, the family... We don’t have much money left! The master even sold his green-maned unicorn with the carriage and he had to let go of a handful of guards...”

“What?! This is outrageous! Are we really in such a desperate position?” Being on the other side of the wall, Ye Wei could only hear the muffled voices intermittently due to the noisy street. He frowned in puzzlement upon understanding what was being said...

The Ye family had always been financially stable and actually didn’t do too bad for themselves. Hearing about the financial instability of their family and how the master of the house sold his beast carriage, Ye Wei was shocked to the extreme as this had to be a fantasy.

Although Ye Wei had almost no presence in the Ye family, the family never forgot about him. His allowance always arrived on time and everyone in the family was very friendly towards him.

“Creak...”

Ye Wei, despite the heaviness he felt, pushed open the wooden door in front of the little yard.

“Pa, Ma, I’m home!” he said as he walked towards the house.

“Little Wei!”

The front door popped open, and a woman in her thirties threw herself at Ye Wei. She was plainly dressed, but it worked together with her light and natural makeup complimenting her well as she gave off a warm and pleasant air.

She was Ye Wei’s mother, Joe Wan!

“Young master Ye Wei has returned.” Fu Shun, the butler, stood beside Joe Wan and respectfully greeted Ye Wei as he squeezed a smile out of his tired face.

Ye Wei was not naturally talented — not in his built nor his Sentient. The Ye family, with that in mind, did not mock or bully him. He was just inadvertently ignored from time to time because he had no chance of becoming a Warrior. The elders’ focus in the family fell on the more talented kids his age.

The Ye family didn’t have to worry about having a roof over their heads

or food on the table, but these new internal and external problems made it more important than ever to stick together.

“Mister Fu!” Ye Wei was happy to see familiar faces again and greeted the butler with a smile on his face.

“Ma’am, excuse me.”

Fu Shun left the grey money pouch with Ye Wei’s mom, then bowed and left the house.

“Little Wei, why are you so sweaty? Did you walk all the way home? Come sit here and rest. You silly child, how many times do I have to tell you that the journey is too long a walk for your body? You should have just rented a horse carriage for this trip. It’s just money, our family is fine and eating well!” Joe Wan raised her eyes and gazed at her son, nagged him while looking for a handkerchief for his sweaty face then she poured him a cup of tea.

“Where’s dad?” Ye Wei asked, glancing at the deflated money pouch butler Fu left his mom and started imagining the horrible situation in his head.

“Your father has been busy dealing with family business. He hasn’t been home for five days now he’s working on something... Don’t worry about him. Are you hungry? Mommy will go make you some food,” Joe Wan said with a smile.

Currently, the seventy-two year old three star condensing prime stage

Warrior Ye Zheng Qing, Ye Wei's grandfather, was the head of the family.

Ye Zheng Qing had four sons and three daughters. Ye Wei's father, Ye Yi, was the oldest among his siblings and was responsible for the Ye family's cloth trade. The oldest and second oldest sons were responsible for mystic arms and scrolls respectively, while the youngest son ran a restaurant. All three of Zheng Qing's daughters except the youngest aunt were married.

“Mom, I’m not hungry stop making a fuss. Is the family doing okay?” Ye Wei couldn’t stand his mother acting as if everything was fine, as he stood up and looked right into his mother’s eyes as he asked sincerely.

Ye Wei saw and felt something was not right with the family, having overheard the conversation between his mom and the butler, Ye Wei came to a conclusion: The Ye family is going through a crisis!

And it was not a minor one, or his father would not be away for five days, nor would they have only four guards at the front gate instead of normal eight, nor would grandad have sold his green-maned unicorn and carriage!

“My child, why are you worrying about these little matters? You should just pay attention in school and focus on your own problems!” Joe Wan wanted to change the topic, flustered her eyes were darting around.

“Mom, I am grown up and Ye is my last name so the family’s business is my business!” Ye Wei declared solemnly in a deep voice while keeping eye contact with his mom.

“Oh my child, if you insist...” Joe Wan walked to her son. Patting his head and sighed, mumbling to herself as she was still a little hesitant wondering if it was the correct thing to do, being completely open to Ye Wei.

“Have you heard of the Du family?” Joe Wan asked after taking a deep breath.

“The Du’s are one of the ‘Big Three’ in Green Moon City, right? Is our family business being challenged by the Du’s?” Ye Wei asked with a big frown on his forehead.

“Unfortunately,” His mom nodded.

“Mystic scrolls, arms, restaurant, cloth and the horse ranch, everything was affected, especially our scroll business, seventy percent of our family’s revenue comes from scrolls. The Du family just hired a Runemaster’s first apprentice to personally inscribe all the scrolls in their shops. Whereas the scrolls on our shelves were inscribed by a regular student from the Runemasters’ Union. On top of that, they are undercutting our price by thirty percent, the scrolls are basically stuck on our shelves.” Joe Wan was upset and it was visible all over her face.

“We had to lower the price because the scrolls weren’t selling. but we won’t be making any profit on them. We are not as wealthy as the Du family, they can use their money like this to hit the Ye family’s business, but we can’t do anything about it!”

“We have been struggling for two months now and the family is running low on resources, your grandpa even had to sell his unicorn

carriage. It is a crisis like none we have faced before.”

“Little Wei, your grandpa, dad, and uncles are supporting the family so you should not worry about the ins and outs of everything just focus and practice on your studies at South Star. Because only when you are strong will you be able to help the family, when you are as strong as say... your cousin, Ye Zhong!

“Nor should you worry or feel guilty about your expenses if worse comes to worst your mom’s dowry will be enough to support you until you finish your education!”

Joe Wan patted her son’s shoulder, trying to comfort and reassured him with transparency and proposing a backup plan.

“Why did the Du family do this to us all of a sudden? Did one of us step on their toes?

Ye Wei wasn’t really worried about his expenses. All he cared about was his family’s wellbeing, because he knew he could trust Lin Zi Yan to put in a good word with the right people and that she will inform the vice principal when school starts again, which could possibly score him a scholarship making money not a problem.

‘There are around three hundred people under the Ye’s roofs including family members and employees, if the family collapsed what would grandpa do? What would dad and my uncles do?’

Ye Wei felt the weight on his shoulders wishing to be of help in the dire

situation.

‘Although I am just a two star Student, and though I am far from as useful as my cousin Ye Zhong, I should be able to do something with my excellent soul sensitivity!

It’s not impossible for the family to get out of this slump, what bothered Ye Wei was the mysterious motive behind these economic attacks from one of The Big Three. The Ye family is hardly big enough to be considered a threat to the Du family and their bullying simply did not make sense.

“We didn’t and are in no position to mess with them, the dispute started when grandpa refused to sell our plot of land next to North Hill Bay. That land was passed down through generation after generation selling it was out of the question for your grandpa, which was more than reasonable and should be respected. Do you understand?”

“Ever since the refusal, the Du family started to take action against us. They started by ruining the restaurant, horse ranch, and other minor sources of income which was not a huge problem. But two months ago they started undercutting our scroll business, the lifeblood of the Ye family!” Joe Wan was filled with indignation.

“What kind of behavior is that!?”

Ye Wei too, got emotional. ‘Just because you want to buy it we have to sell it? That is a disgusting attitude! They know very well that plot of land belonged to us since forever and that our family’s tomb is there at North Hill Bay. I know technically it’s grandpa’s decision not to sell it,

but I am sure the rest of the family would think the same in the name of our heritage and family history!’

“Don’t worry about it son we have something to celebrate tonight! Your little aunt Ye Jing Jing has broken through, she just became a seven star Warrior, and we are throwing a dinner party tonight for the occasion!” His mom smiled.

“Little aunt is that good now?!”

Ye Wei too, smiled enthusiastically. Like star levels with Students, breaking through the fifth and seventh star level are major obstacles, but the power one gain after breaking through is significant.

Students can perform stances once they reach seven stars. When Warriors reach the seven star level they gain a thin layer of Qi, primal feathers, which will permanently cover their body as an extra layer of armor, and it grants them the ability to levitate making them stronger and faster fighters!

Some say it takes more than a dozen six star Warriors to take down a seven star Warrior.

Ye Jing Jing was Ye Wei’s youngest aunt, she was twenty-five years old and she is even more gifted than Ye Zhong, because condensing prime stage was within reach for her now that she is a seven star, only three stars away!

To establish a family, getting to condensing prime stage was an

unwritten cultivation requirement, and there were only two Warriors at that stage in the entire family: grandpa, a three star condense prime Warrior and big uncle Ye Hai at one star.

Other than his parents, Ye Jing Jing was the closest to Ye Wei in his family because of this Ye Wei was ecstatic about his little aunt's progress.

Chapter 15 – Dinner Party

Night fell quickly upon the Ye manor. The halls and corridors were heavily decorated with big, red, festive lanterns that brightened the mood and interior. In the banquet hall, the leading figures of the family wore long-lost smiles.

With the recent events, the leaders of the family had nothing but struggles and obstacles to overcome, and it was pleasant and refreshing having something to celebrate.

In the spacious banquet hall, grandpa Ye Zheng Qing was sitting at the family head's seat, right at the head of the table. The old man was surrounded by an aura of power. He was around seventy years of age, and although all his hair had long since turned white, his face had a healthy, red glow, which showed he was in great shape, due to his cultivation and years of training.

To his left was Ye Wei's big uncle, Ye Hai; second uncle, Ye Han; his dad, Ye Yi; and little uncle, Ye Yu. To his right were the talents of the younger generation: little aunt, Ye Jing Jing; male cousins: Ye Zhong and Ye Xuan; and the female cousins: Ye Qiu and Ye Ling.

Big uncle, Ye Hai, was a one star condensing prime Warrior, while his dad, Ye Yi, and uncles, Ye Han and Ye Yu, were all ten star Warriors.

For big family dinners, like this evening's, the seating plan was very detailed and well thought out — the stronger one was the closer they would be seated to the head of the house. Less talented individuals, like

Ye Wei, were placed in the corners of the hall which was next to his mother. Despite the clear segregation, the family members had healthy relationships between one another, unlike other big families where the less important members could rarely join a conversation between the stronger members and elders.

Ye Wei's eyes were focused on the person sitting at the head of the table, as he was admiring Ye Zheng Qing's aura. Although he had the eyes of a strong, experienced eagle, the skin around them showed a slight weariness. 'It must be the recent drama,' Ye Wei thought.

He felt a bit uneasy and helpless and wished he could share his grandfather's burdens.

"This is the first dinner party we've had in more than three months! We are all gathered here today to celebrate Jing Jing's seven star Warrior breakthrough!" Ye Zheng Qing's masculine voice echoed throughout the fully seated banquet hall.

Ye Zheng Qing patted his youngest daughter's shoulder, feeling very proud. He raised his head to look at his family: "I hope all the young folks can be motivated and inspired by Jing Jing. Train hard and become something to bring honor to our family!"

"Congratulations, little sis! The Ye family has gained a seven star Warrior, let's toast! To my little sister!" Ye Hai stood up and said, raising his glass with a big grin on his face.

"You are a condensed stage Warrior, I still have a long way to go!" Ye Jing Jing raised her glass and emptied it into her mouth simultaneously.

“Indeed, you’re not at big brother’s level, but you’re going to overtake me soon, right? Let your second oldest brother offer you another drink!” Ye Han laughed and raised his glass.

“Thank you, brother!” Jing Jing emptied another glass without hesitation at all.

Ye Jing Jing was very straightforward with everything, even masculine in some ways. She was very different compared to the ladylike women in other big families: twenty-six, unmarried, and still living in the family manor. She had a great personality, a people person, and she was usually the third in command after grandpa and Ye Hai, making decisions and taking care of the family when those two were away.

Little aunt has always taken care of Ye Wei since he was a toddler; she once said “I will take care of the young ones in the family and help you kids establish yourselves, even if it means not getting married! Watching you grow is a great cause, and I will be satisfied and pleased.” He had always thought that little aunt was kidding, but as he thought about it his eyes got a bit wet upon seeing her still standing by her words after all these years.

Little aunt was truly a family woman.

“Dig in!” The big and harmonious family put a smile on Ye Zheng Qing’s aging face as he picked up his chopsticks and started the feast.

There was great joy throughout the banquet hall, but everyone had a common and unspoken worry, thus they were not fully relaxed. The

bitterness could be felt, seeing as there was a family crisis going on, after all.

Everyone ate and chatted, trying to temporarily put the negativity aside.

When Ye Wei was half full, he excused himself and went outside for some fresh summer air, theorising ways in which he could use his rune knowledge to help his family get out of this unfavourable position. With his gift and Lin Zi Yan's referral, Ye Wei should be skilled enough to become a disciple of master Yi.

There were only three Runemasters who lived in Green Moon City, and master Yi was the best and most respected of the three. If Ye Wei became his disciple, it would greatly improve the family's reputation.

Ye Wei considered this possibility and decided that this would be his course of action. He clenched his fist tightly in determination, ready to turn this crisis around.

Big uncle Ye Hai also came out to the courtyard, heading straight towards Ye Wei while he was lost in deep thought.

Among relationships between his uncles, Ye Wei got along the worst with his big uncle Ye Hai. Ye Hai was always harsh and strict with Ye Wei. This contributed to Ye Wei's fear of being close to and opening up to his big uncle.

Noticing Ye Hai approaching, Ye Wei lowered his head, trying to avoid

possible eye contact, and thought of an escape plan.

“Ye Wei, where are you going!” Ye Hai shouted. He was not going to let his nephew get away.

“Big uncle...” Ye Wei unwillingly greeted him.

“Shouldn’t you be at South Star Academy right now? What on earth do you think you’re doing here?” Ye Hai was slightly irritated by Wei’s presence.

“I...” Ye Wei tried to explain himself but got cut off.

“Don’t tell me you skipped school? Could you put more effort into studying and breakthrough to the two star level?” Ye Hai questioned earnestly with a rough tone: “Your cultivation is the worst among the new generation! All your younger siblings and cousins have overtaken you!”

Ye Wei wanted to declare that he had broken through to the two star level, but the words would not come out of his mouth. He noticed Ye Hai’s stern face and looked down at the ground again: “Yea, I will try my best!” He wanted to surprise his uncle with actions to prove his worth and shut up Ye Hai without using words.

Ye Hai was somewhat eased by Ye Wei’s submissive acceptance to his scolding: “At least you are listening. I will let you off for now. Our family is not doing too great at the moment, so your generation should train harder and contribute more to the family as soon as possible!”

Ye Wei didn't think big uncle would him let him off the hook so easily, so he left the scene immediately. Having felt Ye Hai's disappointment, Ye Wei was desperate to get stronger as fast as he could!

'In your minds I have always been the worst, a bottom dweller. Well that is going to change, just you watch.' Ye Wei swore to himself.

After Ye Wei walked pretty far, he turned a corner on his way back to the banquet. Right before he was about to leave Ye Hai's sight was when he caught something out of the corner of his eye. He stood still behind the wall next to him and peered forward.

Three figures stood there in the dead of night, in the deserted courtyard where his uncle had been standing; they were the three leaders of the Ye family.

"Ye Hai, how is the scroll business looking?" Ye Zheng Qing asked with a low pitched voice. He cut to the chase, hoping to have a better picture of how the most important issue was progressing.

"We lowered the retail price by thirty percent, but the figures are still suboptimal. There are more scrolls in the shop than there are customers." Ye Hai sounded slightly depressed. "Scrolls the Du family sell can dish out thirty percent of the original stance's energy, whereas our scrolls can only output up to twenty percent. They're not selling any better, even with the price cut."

A bitter smile emerged on Ye Hai's face; despite his best efforts, the scroll business remained irreparable.

He uncle was the macho man of the family, and after hearing how washed up Ye Hai sounded, Ye Wei now realised how bad the situation really was.

“Han, how is the arms trade?” The head shifted his focus on to his second oldest son, who was responsible the other field.

The Ye family had its fingers in many different businesses, but arms and scrolls had always been the most profitable two!

“The Du family undercuts us by forty percent, only two pieces left our doors in the past two months! And one of master Yi’s men sent a message regarding the cancellation of our redistribution rights, if we don’t sell their goods. They will find another distributor!” Ye Han looked anxious, both of the family’s most profitable businesses were retail of others’ work, and the risk of getting cut off was increasing.

“The Big Three indeed, ruthless moves!”

“They are taking this too damn far!”

Chapter 16 – The White Tiger’s Assault

“Pa, what should we do next?” Ye Hai frowned and asked.

“The foundations of our family’s establishments took a few hundred years to build. If we are to collapse now, we’ll have to move out of the manor and spread out all across the city... Our enemies will take this chance attack us!” Ye Zheng Qing let out a long deep sigh and looked up into the sky and thought: ‘This is an enormous world. Is there somewhere our Ye family can just live in peace?’

“The land in North Hill Bay belongs to the Ye Family. Our ancestors were buried there. I will never give up our ancestral land. No matter what happens, I will defend it with my life!”

Ye Wei was still standing behind the wall while they were talking, eavesdropping, and the conversation got heavier and heavier. He felt insecure because the thought of his family losing its integrity was frightening, but the thought of losing the only place he could ever call home was unsettling.

“There are not a lot of options left... We shall agree to the duel posed by the Du family!” Ye Zheng Qing took a gold plated letter of challenge from his pocket: “A messenger from the Du family delivered this letter of challenge. The event shall be in three days, where the younger generation of our families shall fight against each other! If we win the duel, the Du family has promised that they will stop interfering with our family’s businesses, but if we lose, we will have to sell our ancestral land to them!”

“That is out of the question!” Ye Hai said anxiously. “The strongest youngster we have is a four star Warrior, but the Du family’s youngsters have already become five Star Warriors. The strongest of them, Du Yue Han, is even a six star Warrior!”

“We cannot have Ye Zhong take this impossible task!” Ye Han frowned. He knew that the Ye family had little chance at winning and there was no way that they could risk the loss of their most talented youngster.

“I will train privately with Ye Zhong until the duel. Either way, one of our youngsters has to take on this challenge. Even if we lose, we can say at the least that we’ve tried our best. There is no other way out of this dilemma!” The head of the family made this tough decision, as the family was completely cornered by this crisis.

Ye Hai and Ye Han felt helpless and dejected. Their Ye family might fall very and they could do nothing to stop it.

“Let’s put that aside for now. We also have to plan for the worst outcome: If we lose the duel, our old foes will be at the doorstep the moment they hear the news of our loss. We must send the young ones to Ning City, where they should be safe with the Yang family.” Ye Zheng Qing felt crushed. Having to split the family up was his worst nightmare.

“Father...” Ye Han clenched his fist as he saw his father’s face.

Ye Hai was speechless. After some consideration, he broke his silence: “This will be the right move if we lose the duel. I’m not worried about most of the kids, but my young nephew Ye Wei... He’s not a talented child. The other children will survive and find their own way even if

they're under a different roof. They're strong enough to work simple jobs, like being a guard, and eventually have their own small families. With Ye Wei, it won't be that easy. He has a red Sentient, and I'm quite sure he will be excluded regardless of our good relationship with the Yangs. He is protected by the Ye family, and we provide for him so he can live a carefree life and not worry about food and clothes... It won't be this simple if he has to live under another roof!"

Having heard his big uncle's confession, Ye Wei was breathless. Two lines of tears fell from his red eyes.

Ye Wei always thought that his big uncle was the worst-tempered and the meanest of his uncles — the uncle who disliked him the most. He never thought Uncle Ye Hai cared about him and his future that much!

Ye Wei's heart was suddenly filled with guilt. He had always misunderstood his uncle who had always been strict with him for the noblest intention!

'I was a child who didn't care about anything outside my little bubble, but in difficult times like this... As grandpa said, it's about time the young ones take on some responsibility. I will defend the Ye family to my final breath! I have to do my part in keeping our loved ones close together. I won't sit back and watch us get separated! I swear I won't let this happen!" With the back of his hand, he wiped the tears away and firmly walked away. Slowly, Ye Wei's figure disappeared into the dark of the night.

Soon after that talk, Ye Zheng Qing announced the duel with the Du family in front of the family at the banquet.

Upon hearing the news, the majority of the family members' faces became pale with fear for the family's future. Although Ye Zhong, the strongest of the younger generation in the Ye family, was fairly famous in Green Moon City, his opponent would be a six Star Warrior. Fame would not even out the two star level difference in power!

"Our Ye family has no other choice..." Grandpa looked at the disapproving faces of the family members and sighed. He looked as if he were ten years older for a brief moment.

"This is outrageous!" Aunt Jing Jing violently smashed the table and stood up. She shouted: "I will take on the Du family myself!" For a moment, she looked like a rampaging demon who would kill without hesitation... Her pretty face was bright red, but it was unclear whether it was from rage or alcohol.

"Father, is there no other way? Can't we discuss this matter with master Yi? I don't see Ye Zhong winning this duel, and the land at North Hill Bay is at stake. Our ancestors' remains were buried there for crying out loud!" Ye Wei's dad, Ye Wi, stood up and seeked to stop this madness.

The most respected Runemaster in Green Moon City, Master Yi, actually had connections with the Ye family. If he were to be the peacemaker, even the Du family would have to stand down!

"Master Yi..." Grandpa shook his head with a bitter smile on his face: "Master Yi's prestigious status comes with tight schedules and security concerns. It's not so easy to arrange a meeting with him, even as the head of one of the Big Three. This matter is too urgent. Do you really

think I could convince Master Yi to help us in a couple days?"

"Gramps. When is the Du Family coming over?" Ye Zhong had held his tongue until now. He now spoke each word loud and clear in a declaratory manner.

"For the ancestral land, I would give my life before giving up! I am the strongest in the younger generation and we need a strong leader in this moment of crisis!" Ye Zhong cracked his knuckles as he said these words.

"In three days!" Grandpa replied. He could see the recklessness in Ye Zhong's posture, so he added: "Little Zhong, just do your best. There will always be a winner and a loser, and nobody in this hall will blame you. What you must not do is let your emotions control you. You are the one with the most potential in our family. I can picture you taking over for me one day and becoming the master of this family!" Ye Zheng Qing was clearly worried about Ye Zhong's hot-headedness

"Of course! Gramps, dad, uncles and aunts, I will head back now!" Ye Zhong nodded and turned around, heading out of the hall.

"Cousin!"

Ye Wei watched his cousin walking away, visibly stressed with clenched hands. The family's future was in his cousin's hands; he couldn't imagine how much pressure Ye Zhong was under right now, how much weight there was on his poor cousin's shoulders.

Ye Zhong had always been a supportive figure to Ye Wei since he was a

young boy. Namingly, after the entry exam to South Star Academy, upon hearing the bad news about his red Sentient, his big cousin was there to comfort and motivate him patiently and caringly.

‘Big Cousin is likely to risk his life for the family, but what about me? Can’t I do anything but sit in the corner quietly and watch this unfold? No, I have to do something! I will not allow anyone to plot against my family, nor will I let anybody hurt my cousin!’ Ye Wei remembered how he perfected Triple Tidal Palm and helped Zi Yan acquire cosmic energy, thus allowing her to break through to become a Warrior. He planned to help Ye Zhong with his training and perfect his stances, improving his cultivation and the chance of victory!

‘I’ll have to give this a go!’ Ye Wei raised his head slowly and clenched his fists.

After the feast, Ye Wei and his parents left the banquet hall and walked back to their house together.

“Little Wei, you should be tired from the trip home right? Get some rest, son.” Ye Yi patted his son’s head, sounding a bit down, which was probably because of the announcement at the dinner party.

“Of course! Ma, pa, you two should get some rest soon too!” Ye Wei nodded agreeingly and made his way back to his room while his parents returned to theirs.

The night was getting darker and darker. Dim, flickering tea lights in the lanterns made the quiet walkways and corridors in the manor look slightly frightening. A midnight breeze gently blew past the tealights and

leaves on the trees, the sizzling leaves seemed a bit tired in the darkness.

Silence fell as the wind slowly died down as the starlight was fading, leaving the moon on her own. Ye Wei was appreciating the peaceful and gorgeous night sky while walking in the dark path towards Ye Zhong's residence with the moonlight's guidance.

Ye Zhong was relatively independent. He was no longer living with his parents, but in a separate quarter by himself. As expected, he was training very hard in the courtyard.

‘How long has he been doing this?’ Ye Wei peeped through the gate into the courtyard, and he saw that his cousin was surrounded by heavy, white mist.

It was a cloud of evaporated sweat!

Ye Zhong was performing the high spirit-level stance White Tiger’s Assault repeatedly, and the drain of will-force and Qi made him have a pale complexion and caused him to gasp heavily.

A high spirit level stance was a Warrior’s limit. The White Tiger’s Assault was the most powerful among the sixteen high spirit level stances that the Ye family had and it was also what Ye Zhong was best at.

There were significant strength differences between the stances. Simple, advanced, peak and forbidden, from weakest to strongest, were the four sublevels.

Forbidden stances existed and were extremely powerful, but generally avoided, as performing them could be harmful to a Warrior's mind and body akin a double edged blade.

The White Tiger's Assault belonged to the peak level. It was easily one of the strongest stances a Warrior could master at Ye Zhong's level.

The dim moonlight was the only reason anything was visible and in the dark, Ye Zhong drew an interwinding web of runes around his steaming body.

The web of runes quickly shrunk, with him as the centre, and formed a large cat, a tiger as white as the first snow!

Although Ye Wei was standing quite a distance from outside the courtyard, his skin could feel the force emitting from the cat from more than twenty feet away. A wave of pressure tightened Ye Wei's chest. It was getting harder and harder to breathe and a chill went down his spine. He was suddenly enveloped by inexplicable fear.

Ye Wei remained calm as he could while staring at the white tiger levitating over his cousin's head.

The mountain emerged in Ye Wei's consciousness and a golden light shone through the surface of his red Sentient that was slightly visible deep in his dark iris.

'Two nodes out of the hundred and thirty-six runes can be improved. If

my big cousin's Qi could flow through them quicker and in sync with the other nodes, the White Tiger's Assault can become significantly stronger.' Ye Wei's eyes brightened up like shining stars in a bright, night sky.

'Two flaws! I will figure out how to polish the stance and cousin Zhong's best stance will become much better once it's been perfected!

Chapter 17 – Minor Changes

Ye Wei wasn't confident about repeating what he did when he was with Lin Zi Yan before actually spotting the errors in his cousin's stance, but now his body and mind were ready to refine and perfect the White Tiger's Assault. After all, helping his cousin would be the only way for him to contribute to the Ye family's last stand!

Excited and euphoric, Ye Wei placed his hand on the gate as he leaned forward to have a closer look at his cousin's training. The gate moved an inch as he put his weight onto it and squeaked.

The squeak made by the opening gate was just loud enough to surprise Ye Wei causing him to panic and immediately pull his hand off the gate.

“Show yourself!”

Ye Zhong was focused and tensed while his eyes were ice-cold when he asked the intruder to identify himself. He bent his knees slightly and tensed up his calves. Then, he launched himself and within the blink of an eye he was already at the gate, charging in a way akin to a tiger ambushing one from above.

The heightened hearing of a four star Warrior could easily pick up the squeak, it was not surprising that Ye Zhong could hear him.

Ye Zhong's hand was glowing bright red as he pulled it towards his chest like a loaded cannon ready to be fired. If he released his strike, the door would, without a doubt, turn into dust and Ye Wei, who was right

behind it, would meet the same fate.

“Cousin Zhong, it’s me!” He shouted while realizing that this could be the last moment of his life, which caused Ye Wei to be covered in cold sweat in a rush of terror.

“Ye Wei, is that you?”

Ye Zhong recognized the familiar voice coming from behind the gate. ‘The owner of it should be friendly.’ This idea surfaced in his consciousness just before the point of no return, so he stopped his attack before it hit him. However, the recoil from the attack took its toll on his body, causing his face to become a little pale.

“Squeak!”

He opened the gate, while not being able to decide if he should laugh or cry as looked at Ye Wei who looked like an injured critter resting on the ground, “Ye Wei, it is way past your bedtime, why are you wandering around? Do you know that you could have been seriously injured a moment ago?”

Ye Zhong rubbed his little cousin’s scalp and told him off with a fake, serious face.

“The weather is horrible today. The heat is fine, but the humidity kept me up so I decided to take a walk and get some fresh air. My feet lead me here somehow, I don’t even know how I got here!” Ye Wei came up with a random excuse, while scratching the back of his head and smiling.

“You little rascal come on in!”

Ye Zhong reluctantly shook his head with an amused look in his eyes as he closed the gate behind them while dragging Ye Wei into his courtyard.

“Du Han Yue is a six star Warrior. Cousin, are you nervous about the fight tomorrow?” Ye Wei innocently posed the obvious question to his now extremely pale and tired relative.

“What do you know about it!” He replied and knocked his little cousin in the forehead with his knuckles. Then, he looked at the beautiful silver moon in the night sky. The moon’s light reflected off his face and revealed his anxiousness.

Nervous?

As a four star Warrior, having to physically confront a well known genius, the young six star Warrior Du Yue Han of Green Moon City with their family’s ancestral land at stake, who wouldn’t be nervous?

Just thinking about the consequences of failing was enough to make it difficult for one to breath!

“Cousin, you were performing the White Tiger’s Assault right? That’s an impressive high spirit level stance! I wish I was as strong as you... I can’t even make stances!”

“Could you maybe show it to me again? I want to see it close up.” Ye Wei looked at Ye Zhong with a fire in his eyes while scratching his head because he was shy from his overenthusiasm and questions.

Worried he might have gotten it wrong, Ye Wei wanted to verify the flaws he spotted a moment ago.

“If you work hard enough, you can and will be able to do stances!” Ye Zhong knew that talent was a sensitive topic for the mediocre Ye Wei, so he patted him on the shoulders as he motivated him with words. ‘With his red Sentient, nobody really knows how long he will need to become a seven star Student... Ten? Twenty? Thirty years?’

“You should take a few steps back.” Ye Zhong could not refuse the request from his little cousin.

“Roger that!”

Ye Wei nodded his head enthusiastically as he stepped back around approximately ten meters. He opened his eyes wide this time and watched his cousin, waiting for the white tiger to strike.

“Zap!”

Ye Wei saw this process before, but when comparing to Zi Yan, Ye Zhong did every step with much more flare. The will-force on his finger was much more dense and the Qi on the will-force was thicker. He drew rune after rune like it was second nature.

In a matter of seconds, Ye Zhong was surrounded by the hundred and thirty-six freshly-drawn runes, shrouded by the blurry shining runes which caused him to look mysterious and almost angelic.

Here it was, White Tiger's Assault!

Ye Zhong uttered a cry, causing the hundred and thirty-six spots of light to wrap around his body quickly as they came closer to one another.

Rawr!

The white tiger roared ferociously, as if it was a beast that had descended from the heavens themselves. The pressure wave it produced spread and quickly, like a mini tsunami travelling across the courtyard, the fallen leaves were picked up by turbulence produced by the stance and were blown away until stopped by the walls of the courtyard. The pressure even knocked Ye Wei off balance despite being ten meters away. The overpowering pressure wave shook his body and he staggered for a while before finally regaining balance after taking six steps back.

'I can see it clearly now!'

There was a golden flash deep in Ye Wei's eyes for a single moment when he was analysing the runes that formed the stance, his dark eyes focusing onto the two wrong nodes within the stance.

'This one is hidden much better than in the other stance. How should I perfect this and let cousin Zhong know?' Ye Wei frowned, as he tried to figure out how to tell his cousin.

‘If I just tell him there are two mistakes in the White Tiger’s Assault stance there’s no way he will believe it. He’s just going to think I’m crazy.’ He tried to figure out how to send the message in a subtle manner so as to not reveal his abilities.

“That was astounding!” Ye Wei took a deep breath and went on with his play. He attempted to look jealous and astonished as he approached his cousin, “Cousin, is the order and position of those runes set? Would the stance still work if you for example, swap this one and that one around?”

Hearing Ye Wei’s outlandish question, Ye Zhong went silent and then laughed: “Of course they are fixed, little cousin. The masters who invented the art of stances thought thoroughly regarding the position and sequential order of the runes of each stance; they are optimised to their fullest in order to promote synergy between the runes. If you swap them around, either it wouldn’t work or it would be less powerful than before which is undesirable!”

“Ah ha! I’ve heard that Warriors can manipulate mystic runes, but you know how far away I am from that level, right cousin? But I want to see it and had that idea, so I can grasp the feel of it... Ye Wei was trying to take full advantage of his puppy dog eyes, using them to manipulate his caring cousin: “Don’t you want to show me how it’s done, cousin?”

It was obviously working. Ye Zhong’s sympathy told him his talentless little cousin was a weakling stuck in the bottom of the well and wanted a peek at the world above. Naturally, he accepted the request with a friendly smile: “Manipulating runes is not hard, little Wei. No matter what hardship life has for you never give up. Especially in things you

think you're not as talented in as others. For example, Supreme Chen Feng was not at all talented when he was a teenager!

“Okay, watch, manipulating runes is simple!” Ye Zhong looked at his little cousin with a thoughtful glance. The will-force on his fingertips formed an magnetic like attraction towards the runes, which allowed him to effortlessly swapped the two runes around and turned them upside down as Ye Wei suggested.

The new pattern flowed and upon completion it formed a slightly different stance.

The Qi within the stance was now noticeably much more fluid since the formation of runes was more efficient.

In seconds, the courtyard was filled with a silver light and the white tiger figure was shining brighter and clearer than ever before. Two roars were heard, each of them loud as thunder, shaking tiles on the roofs near Ye Zhong’s quarters.

“Rawr!”

The tiger’s eyes were wide open while roaring. It was a glorious scene to behold as it seemed akin to the coronation of the king of the beasts .

This time around, however, Ye Zhong only used less than half the Qi he normally used for White Tiger’s Assault, but it was more powerful!

“Eh, what is going on?!” Ye Zhong was completely baffled. When he

raised his head in shock, he doubtfully looked at the figure of the white tiger above him. The power of the stance had undoubtedly improved by approximately one third!

White Tiger's Assault is the strongest stance among the sixteen high level spirit stances that the Ye seniors taught to the younger generation; how was it possible that one minor change improved a stance with such a long history so enormously!

Chapter 18 – Perfect Assault

Ye Zhong was still not convinced by his senses and felt the astounding impact of the tiger's strike then look over to Ye Wei with suspicion.

‘Fluke?’

‘One out of one hundred and thirty six, he picked one rune to alter and it just happened to refine the stance? Just how lucky is that?’

The tiger's roar echoed throughout the whole manor, the stronger family members' heightened senses were the first to pick it up. Everyone who heard it turned their heads towards the source and knew it was Ye Zhong from the direction it came from.

‘Little Zhong works well under pressure, way to go! Judging by the tiger roar's magnitude, he is a good thirty percent stronger than when I last saw him fight!’ Ye Zheng Qing was overjoyed.

‘Well done son! With your talent our family might just have a chance!’

Upon hearing the roar and realising it was the sound of Ye Zhong's improvement, young and old in the family were happy and proud. The younger family members will be gathering around Ye Zhong asking for a show from their idol tomorrow morning.

Ye Zhong's hands were still shaking, and he jogged his memory to investigate the drastic difference in power the modification caused. ‘In

hindsight, this minor change was actually genius, and it would only work on these two specific runes.

The White Tiger's Assault was passed down for generations and attempts to refine it have been carried out by the Ye's predecessors, but Ye Wei's suggestions seemed to have spotted what they missed and made a more significant impact on the stance in terms of improvement!

“Wei, be honest with me, what was going on? Don’t tell me you don’t know what happened, or it was a coincident because I will not believe that!” Ye Zhong looked excited and placed his hands on Ye Wei’s shoulders, looked him right in the eyes as he said each word clearly with sincerity.

“I am not completely sure, a teacher at the academy told me I have outstanding soul sensibility and the potential to become a Runemaster.” Ye Wei did not hold back the information and answered calmly; he felt a bit embarrassed having played stupid and gotten caught out.

“Outstanding soul sensitivity and the potential to become a Runemaster?” Ye Zhong was startled and euphoric, his head was buzzing, overwhelmed by this tremendous surprise. ‘Red Sentient Ye Wei could become a Runemaster?!’

He held Ye Wei’s shoulder tight and wanted to make sure he heard right, even though his soul sensibility talent was confirmed by correction to the stance. “Is that true?” He was in seventh heaven, Ye Wei had refined the White Tiger’s Assault so casually.

A potential Runemaster, Runemaster Ye, this is big news!

There were only around thirty Runemaster apprentices based in Green Moon City to three Runemasters, if Ye Wei was to become one with his connections the Ye family can easily befriend powerful individuals for quests and expeditions.

Taking these benefits into consideration, the talentless Ye Wei was actually the greatest treasure of Ye family, a hidden gem, a trump card that can turn things around and put the Ye clan on the map! If Ye Wei completes his training as a Runemaster, he will become as strong as a seven star Condensed Prime Warrior!

Nobody, not even the Big Three would look down on a family that houses a Runemaster!

Ye Zhong could not imagine how the elders of the family would react to Ye Wei's new found talent, the Ye family has been the underdogs for too long!

"Haha! Little cousin, if anyone say anything bad about you, send them my way and I'll give them a good beating!" Ye Zhong clenched his fist and declared his endorsement jokingly, the doubt in his mind and frown on his face vanished.

"Yea, but cousin Zhong, I still need to become a seven star Student before I can perfect and create my own stances with the speed I am at now it could take years, and the family still need you to help out and do work." Ye Wei tried to bring his talent back to context and he was slightly displeased with the time it may take for him to become a seven star Student and make a difference with his own abilities.

“Do your parents and does gramps know about your talent yet?” Ye Zhong took a couple of deep breath and regained his cool and with a curious look he asked his little cousin.

“I haven’t got myself to do it yet, I was going to tell them when the dust has settled with my future plans about training, and I am sure they have a lot on their minds already with the Du family at our doorstep.” Ye Wei was being as sensitive as always and he knew it would not achieve much telling them.

“You should tell the old guys when you have the opportunity, they might be able to help you with your training and put your talents to good use for the family, however, it is important you don’t let people outside our family know too much!” Ye Zhong knew very well the Du family knowing about little cousin’s soul sensitivity could put his development as a Runemaster, or even his life, in jeopardy!

“Sure!” Ye Wei nodded, he was more concerned about hearing news from Lin Zi Yan regarding his apprenticeship with master Yi, wondering if he would meet the master’s requirement.

Ye Zhong patted his cousin on the shoulder and laughed heartily saying: “Before the news reaches grandpa you won’t get a lot of resources from the family, if you need help on that front your cousin has your back!”

“Thanks so much big cousin!”

“Don’t thank me! That’s what family is for!” Ye Zhong’s mood was

greatly elevated having heard Ye Wei's good news and refining White Tiger's Assault, the evening took a great turn for him.

"About White Tiger's Assault, there is still one other node that can be refined, but it is more complicated than the previous change we made, thus I am not completely confident dealing with it, cousin we will have to work together!" Seeking perfection, Ye Wei said sincerely.

"Another correction?!" Ye Zhong was in awe his eyes sparkled like an innocent child. 'After what was done moments ago, the stance was as strong as a peak high level stance could get and there was still room for improvement? Where are you going with this?'

He was strong, but a four star Warrior has his limits. His Qi and primal energy were not enough to sustain anything more than spirit stances, but if Ye Wei and him can upgrade White Tiger's Assault to a Myst level stance then cosmic energy will descend and upgrade his Sentient and cultivation by miles!

The act of fighters refining a stance and pushing it into a higher level is what triggers the descent of cosmic energy. It's almost as if the cosmos listens to fighters body and rewards those who are worthy by giving them a large amount of pure energy that other would take years of training to acquire and accumulate.

Furthermore the stance grading system is just an indication of the power it holds, if the performer upgraded a stances' power by switching the rune compositions and arrangement they can perform the stances regardless of the star level requirements.

“Time is of the essence!” Ye Zhong will be facing a strong talented foe from the Du family in three days, to refine and perfect this stance he knows is the quickest way to raise his power and combat advantages and with limited time he knew how tight his schedule was.

“What should I do?” Ye Zhong looked forward to further improving the White Tiger’s Assault, he was desperate to hear what Ye Wei had to say and start working on it!

“I am not sure how to fix this node, but I can tell your Qi flow is being slowed down at that place. I would like to observe a few more times before confirming what is causing the problem!” Ye Wei pondered before he made the statement.

“Okay! Whatever it takes. I trust you!” Ye Zhong smiled and nodded.

The cousins shared a look enjoying the moment of openness and started working on making Zhong’s favorite stance perfect.

With the experience he gained from the Triple Tidal Palm refinement he was more confident than the last time, Ye Wei pointed at the rune that needed correcting and started suggesting.

Chapter 19 – Gift From The Heavens

“Get rid of the twenty-third rune, swap the thirty-eighth and fortieth runes with the fifty-seventh and sixty-third one, also they need to be adjusted a little bit. Humm move them up a little more!”

Under Ye Wei’s supervision, Ye Zhong’s fingers started dancing in the air leaving shining trails of runes. Because he was very familiar with White Tiger’s Assault the efficiency he displayed along with his movements made it seem as if he was performing a majestic play. Since childhood Wei and Zhong have been close playmates such that they did not need to use words to communicate, Ye Zhong would know how his little cousin wanted him correct the rune halfway through the hints. They had a bond similar to dancing partners.

“Yep, just like that. Slow down! you don’t want to move it too much!” Ye Wei frowned now and then trying to feel the Qi flow.

There were one hundred and thirty-six complex runes in White Tiger’s Assault compared to Triple Tidal Palm’s thirty-six, finding a balance and an optimal route was therefore not as easy.

The cousins were making adjustments for half of the evening, Ye Zhong got pale from fatigue as Ye Wei got increasingly frustrated as the night progressed without significant progress.

Ye Wei was not only bothered by the lack of progress, his older cousin was only a four star Warrior and he was draining his Qi and will-force rapidly. He didn’t have enough to repeatedly perform a high level stance

much longer if he kept going like this.

“Hey cousin Zhong, let’s take a little break? You should rest a little!”

Ye Wei was looking at his cousin, seeing droplets of sweat on his pale face that were vibrating due to his muscle spasms. Refinement was not a task to be taken lightly, even more so when Ye Wei was not correcting them himself but someone else.

“Yea, good call!”

Ye Zhong nodded and gave up being stubborn. His dantian still had some reserves left, but he ran out of will-force. His head got heavier and heavier causing him to lose focus very often during their attempts. With the back of his hand he wiped off the sweat then adjusted his breathing.

Crossing his legs he sat in the middle of the courtyard. With the Ye family’s Falling Star form running at full speed he regained will-force and Qi while the late night turned into early morning. The Falling Star form is one of the best formulas in Green Moon City, it only circulated for close to four hours, and Ye Zhong had already regained a big portion of his energy when the sun lit up the clouds while peaking above the horizon. Ye Zhong opened his eyes as the first drop of sun shone on his face, then he stood up and exhaled steadily.

“Let’s continue!”

With enthusiasm and a good amount of Qi to spend, Ye Zhong was determined to finish what they started, but his mental fatigue was visible

from a slight frown. Ye Wei caught the small gesture on his cousin's face and said, "The sun is coming up, can't we just call it a night? I can just come back tonight instead?" Ye Wei was worried about his cousin's health, as he looked up to the brightening morning sky and suggested.

Performing stances for the whole evening and through the night took a lot of energy and mental focus. The Falling Star form could indeed recover his body, a bit, but it takes time not training to regain freshness of the mind which is crucial to a productive training session.

Although there were still three days left till the fight, Du Han Yue was no ordinary opponent and Ye Zhong needed every second of training he could fit into his schedule to be able to compete against him. The refinement of White Tiger's Assault could be the key to Zhong's victory. Ye Wei had almost fully comprehend the Qi path of the stance and he was more or less sure he could refine it within a day or two. As such, there was no point in big cousin pushing his body to the limit when he could be resting and be in better shape for the next day's training.

"I am fine, I know my limits!"

"Let's try a few more times before calling it!" Ye Zhong was as stubborn as a bull. Though he was tired a whole night of training got him in the zone and he did not want to stop just yet.

"Well... a few more times it is then." Ye Wei nodded reluctantly; he disagreed but understood his eagerness.

The next couple attempts showed progress. The Qi flow was much smoother, but the connection between the corrected sections was shaky,

so close but yet so far.

Summer mornings in Green Moon City were very pleasant, hot but not scorching. The summer breeze brought the refreshing scent of soil and fresh cut grass. It woke up and refreshed their overworked minds a little.

“Get rid of the twenty-third rune and swap the thirty-eighth and fortieth with the fifty-seventh and the sixty-third!”

“Let’s try placing the hundred and third rune to the left of the twelfth rune as well.”

Ye Wei was nowhere close to being a martial arts expert, but he was very familiar to the structure of White Tiger’s Assault by now. The way it flowed was etched into his memory after seeing it repeatedly throughout the night.

Although their progress wasn’t a lot nor fast, the duo developed great synergy from the failures. Ye Zhong’s fingers reacted to his little cousin’s instructions almost immediately.

Ye Zhong followed the instructions, at this point his body’s movements were pretty much mindless. He finished drawing the hundred and thirty-sixth runes in the stance. The stance seemed to shine brighter upon completion.

A low humming noise erupted out of nowhere from the last rune he drew, its glow gradually intensifying as the tiger took shape. The brightness transformed into a silver spike on the forehead of the beast.

“Blazing Horned Tiger!?” As figure of a powerful spirit beast took shape it shook Ye Zhong. His exhausted mind was woken up by the beast’s cry.

The Horned Tiger stretched its muscular body and let out three roars from the bottom of its lungs. The sound wave slamming onto their ear drums shaking the ground like a small earthquake, the brown soil showed underneath little cracks between patches of green grass.

The terrifying pressure wave caused by the roar went through Ye Wei’s body, his inner-ears were being strained to their limits. Hearing and feeling the third roar he lost his balance and adrenaline sped up his heartbeat, but the paleness of his face did not reflect this. His fear could not suppress the joy erupting from the bottom of his heart smiling he thought, ‘We did it?’

From what Ye Wei could tell, the runes were now at the most optimal combination. The cold blooded tiger had became so powerful he thought it might have broken into the realm of being a forbidden spirit stance.

While the duo were recovering from both their shock and joy, a massive pillar of light descended from the sky and engulfed Ye Zhong.

The pores on Ye Zhong’s skin opened up bathing in the bright white light. His skin turned red and became warmer as the energy rushed through his body, rinsing his meridians and Sentient.

This pillar of light was magnitudes larger than when Triple Tidal Palm was perfected when Lin Zi Yan received her gift.

Lin Zi Yan's Triple Tidal Palm went from a low level stance to a mid level stance. This time around, though, the Ye duo achieved the unimaginable and brought White Tiger's Assault up a whole class. The cosmic energy that descended was several times the quantity of Zi Yan's.

The vast amount of cosmic energy found its way into Ye Zhong and his body was trying to absorb it all, however, the rate of absorption could not keep up with the seemingly endless supply, as bolts of energy bounced off his body and were deflected in Ye Wei's direction.

Ye Wei's body was like a dry sponge. The cosmic energy was immediately soaked up by Ye Wei's thirsty body. It was not a large amount, but for a two star Student this small amount was enough to fill his whole body. The energy worked its way from his skin into his meridians, then followed the meridians into his Sentient. It came to Ye Wei's attention that the gold in his Sentient was starting to outshine the red...

Chapter 20 – Myst Stance

The white pillar of vast cosmic energy bombarded Ye Zhong's Sentient, he was surely the winner in this training session.

“Bang!”

The energy expanded Ye Zhong's Sentient with a small explosion resulting in a breakthrough; he was no longer a four star Warrior!

This was a new experience for Ye Zhong, hearing about how powerful cosmic energy was one thing, but experiencing the intensity first hand was quite another. He broke through to four stars level just recently and according to his training plan he was prepared to spend two more years cultivating before attempting another breakthrough. He did not know how to express his exuberance at achieving the unanticipated.

It was a great experience for Ye Wei as well. The refinement of Zi Yan's Triple Tidal Palm from a low to mid level Spirit stance and her subsequent breakthrough to a Warrior was a great start for any Runemaster.

This time around he upgraded White Tiger's Assault to a new class altogether, from Spirit to Myst, an astounding feat for a second time refiner.

The cosmic energy that descended as a result of the refinement of White Tiger's Assault was immense, if Ye Zhong was more efficient in absorbing it he could have reached the six star level, but a lot of the

energy went to waste which was a shame!

“Five star Warrior Ye Zhong with a Myst level stance in his arsenal! What an evening!” Ye Zhong was euphoric. “You gave our family a Myst stance little cousin!”

Ye Zhong clenched his fist, he closed his eyes and felt the fearsome power flowing in his veins and within his muscles.

To become a dominate family, exclusive powerful stances are a must in this power-centric society.

The Ye family is a upper second class family in Green Moon City, as they have sixteen high level Spirit stances but only three Myst stances!

Once in awhile Myst stances would be seen at the auction houses sold at ridiculously unaffordable prices by Runemasters. Ye Wei just gave the family a peerless gift that will become a family asset and foundation for a stronger Ye family in the future!

The bad new was, other Warriors in the Ye family would not be able to perform the stance until they reach Condensed Prime level, as the Blazing Horned Tiger’s Assault is in the end, a Myst level stance...

“Little Wei!” Ye Zhong looked at his cousin emotionally, grabbing ahold of his shoulders tightly and exclaimed. “You are gifted! A gift for the family!” Grateful was an understatement.

“I just happen to be lucky with this kind of stuff!” Ye Wei did not forget

to be modest, as he showed a small smile on his face and spoke to his cousin. He was overjoyed with Ye Zhong's breakthrough and mastering of a Myst stance before the big fight.

"Hahaha! Whatever you say! However you did it, you made me a five star Warrior and gave our family a Myst stance today!" Ye Zhong could not thank his little cousin properly, he was still amused by what just occurred.

Once upon a time, despite being supportive and loving even Ye Zhong had to agree with the family's opinion when it came to how untalented Ye Wei was. He had been rooting for his little cousin since he was a kid, and today it was an amazing surprise how help came from where he least expected.

"I am pretty worn out, cousin Zhong can I head home and sleep now?" Ye Wei yawned as the words came out of his mouth. Relieved from the pressure of constantly refining White Tiger's Assault, he was completely relaxed now and extra susceptible to the tiredness that had building up since the family dinner; how can he not be falling asleep? Ye Wei gave his big cousin a farewell hug before clumsily dragging his exhausted back to his room.

The sun has risen by now and the turquoise morning sky was decorated with a few scarcely visible stars. The Ye manor was covered in a screen of fog, like a bride's face covered by her veil.

The summer breeze was mixed with the scent of blooming flowers, keeping Ye Wei fast asleep. Meanwhile the master of the house was walking quickly, impatiently heading towards Ye Zhong's quarters. He was mumbling, looking a bit mean, it was apparent he prepared his

mindset to train and instruct.

“It’s not only Du Han Yue we should be worried about, there are also a few five star Warriors little Zhong might have to put on the ground before facing Han Yue. And that as well won’t be easy...”

“Well, this time we will do what we can and roll the dice!”

“From the deep and powerful tiger cries I could hear last night, Zhong has gotten better at using White Tiger’s Assault! That is a silver lining!” Grandpa was proud and smiling when he knocked on Ye Zhong’s door able to see the positive side of the current events.

“Who is it?” Ye Zhong was already awake and fresh, motivated by last night’s progress he was training in the courtyard since he woke up.

“Gramps!” He stated as grandpa entered.

Ye Zheng Qing was positive, but Ye Zhong could still see he was worried and tired from the way his white eyebrows were arching. ‘Did gramps look this old at the banquet?’ He thought.

“Zhong, I heard your tiger’s roar last night. Do you have some good news?” Grandpa was eager to confirm his hypothesis.

“Yea Grandpa! I made amazing progress last night!” Ye Zhong wanted to tell grandpa everything, about his breakthrough, how Ye Wei showed his talent and refined Ye family’s White Tiger’s Assault into a Myst stance, but he wanted Ye Wei to tell grandpa the news himself so he held

his tongue in the end.

“The White Tiger’s Assault is your best stance. I am sure you are on top of it. What we are going to be focusing on today is your battle experience and combat wisdom!” Ye Zheng Qing said solemnly. “You are the strongest Ye in the younger generation. I am not saying the others are weak, but you are the one with the most potential to become a Condensed Prime Warrior while the other’s chances are slimmer. You will become the leader of this family when the time comes, and I want to make sure you become stronger before my time is up.”

Hearing what grandpa had in mind, Ye Zhong felt the weight of the responsibility and got a bit teary as well. “Grandpa you are as healthy as a horse! You can worry about that in fifty years!” Ye Zhong clenched his fist. He could not stop smiling because he knew deep in his heart that Ye Wei could become something too and the family will not be only his responsibility when the day comes!

They started training in a good spirit, grandpa was passing on deep combat knowledge, the mind games and important subtle footwork and battle stances one could only learn from having their life on the line in a fight. During the training Ye Zhong held back and did not reveal that he was already a five star Warrior and also used White Tiger’s Assault when he had to use it, instead of Blazing Horned Tiger’s Assault .

During the day Ye Zhong trained with grandpa and at night he was refining stances with Ye Wei, during these three nights they refined three stances in total: The now Myst stance, Blazing Horned Tiger’s Assault. High level Spirit stances, Spindrift Steps and Triple Plunder Sword.

The two other stances together with White Tiger’s Assault were three of

Ye Zhong's favorite stances. Although they were not that strong, but used in specific situations during combat they become very useful, even more so now that they are refined and unknown by the enemy he was about to face due to the refinements.

Chapter 21 – Bothersome

The dantian of a five star Warrior can't normally support a Myst stance. Unless the Warrior upgraded the stance from Spirit to Myst through refinement. As such with the aid of cosmic energy, performing the Blazing Horned Tiger's Assault was made possible for Ye Zhong.

The other two stances him and Ye Wei worked on produced decent results as well.

Spindrift Steps was considered a simple high level Spirit stance, after the second night of refinement, it was now a peak high level stance.

Also a simple high level Spirit stance, Triple Plunder Sword had more potential out of the two stances. On the third night it reached forbidden high level after three corrections.

Forbidden was not just a name, while performing forbidden stances the user's Qi is essentially compressed and causes great stress to one's meridians and Sentient as the compressed energy passes through the body. Practicing these techniques were eventually tabooed as the lives they claimed accumulated over the years.

Ye Wei was quite aware of the wild Qi flow with Triple Plunder Sword, therefore he swapped in runes that slowed the Qi flow down during the refinement process. The stance was now more Qi demanding, but less damaging to the user's body! Though, even with that in mind, Ye Zhong would not use it unless the timing was perfect, as the pressure Triple Plunder Sword gave to his body is not something he needs while fighting

a stronger opponent where avoiding taking hits is crucial.

Ye Wei was the only person in the household who knew Ye Zhong broke through and became a five star Warrior, also all the refinements were kept secret between the two of them for multiple reasons.

Although Ye Zhong's strength was still outmatched by the six star Du Han Yue, the odds of Ye Zhong coming out on top increased a lot due to the element of surprise and the intensive well rounded training!

It was now the eve before the big fight and the challengers from the Du family would be at the manor's gates by dawn. The two cousins were sitting above the yard on the branch of a century old antique willow sharing their hardships under the mellow moonlight.

They talked about everything, Ye Wei even shared his unpleasant and complicated relationship with Joe Yin.

"That is crazy! Just who does she think she is? Those exact words actually came out of Joe Yin's mouth?" The insults and Joe Yin's behavior were deemed outrageous by Ye Zhong, and his face twisted in anger while cracking his knuckles as he spoke.

"We can't blame it all on her, she is strong enough to get herself a bed at Green Phoenix, it's okay to have some pride. On the other hand though, she was right I should be stronger considering how long I have been training at South Star Academy!" Ye Wei sounded modest but in his mind he was eager to prove everyone wrong.

“Little Wei, never underestimate yourself! One day you will be the dragon and her the snake, and then she will wish she had never said that to a Runemaster!” Ye Zhong patted his little cousin’s shoulder, although he was not a South Star Academy student he could imagine how much mockery and bullying from schoolmates Ye Wei had to endure over the years after hearing Ye Wei open up and talking about what had been bothering him.

Ye Zhong witnessed Ye Wei and Joe Yin growing up, he knew how close they were, therefore understood the pain and suffering Ye Wei had to go through. Getting betrayed and insulted by a childhood friend is more agonising than an outsider could ever imagined. Trying not to be affected by emotions before the big fight, he took a deep breath and suppressed his anger.

In the past, Ye Zhong asked his little cousin how school was going, but the conversations never lasted longer than two sentences. Tonight was the first time Ye Wei felt comfortable enough to open up about his experiences at school and let others see the scars on his heart.

After unloading the burden he had been carrying around for the first time, Ye Wei felt content and relieved. He was pleased to have a caring cousin listen to him.

“Oh well... Guess I just have to get used to it! With Joe Yin though, I’ve always treated her like she was my little sister, I never thought she would turn her back on me. Even if she won’t respect me, I will! I do not need disloyal friends around me!” Ye Wei was leaning on the thick tree trunk, looking up at the silver moon enjoying the heartwarming moment with an honest smile on his face.

‘Having real family caring about me is good enough, Joe Yin can live her own life the way she wants to, I won’t let that bother me.’

Thinking about all the people who really care for him, Ye Wei couldn’t help himself and was thinking about Lin Zi Yan. Her figure appeared in his mind out of the blue. ‘Apart from my family, Zi Yan might be the only person who really cares about me..’

“From what you’ve said about her that substitute teacher Lin Zi Yan seems to be a nice person. She must be a genius then as she is in the special class. How old is she? Ye Zhong wanted to lighten the mood, guessing there might be something romantic going on between her and Ye Wei, so he cheekily changed the topic.

“Lin Zi Yin? I think she is fifteen, maybe?” Ye Wei pretended he wasn’t sure.

Ye Wei could hear from cousin Zhong’s tone of voice that there were subtexts to him changing the topic. He started blushing and shook his head a little.

“Oh just two years older than you? That’s not bad. You two should have loads to talk about!” Ye Zhong grinned as he spoke.

“Cousin Zhong, this is not funny when she gave me the bottle of Fiery Sun Quencher pills she did not look like she was going to miss them. It is obvious her family is extremely rich, even if I like her I am not good enough for her...” Ye Wei shrugged, although he likes Zi Yan, he would not consider anything other than being a friend to her before becoming a Runemaster.

“That is nonsense, no girl on this planet is too good for you! Lin Zi Yan... I cannot recall any Lin family in Green Moon City, is she from around here?” Ye Zhong was curious about her background, but he could not recall anything remotely related to a Lin family.

“Hey Cousin Zhong, it is getting late and you haven’t been resting properly at all and this is the third day in a row now; what do you say about having a good night’s worth of sleep? Fighting for the family is going to be stressful!” Ye Wei looked at the darkening night sky, and told Ye Zhong who appeared to be in a deep thought.

The result of tomorrow’s fight will have a great impact on our family in every aspect!

Ye Zhong was reminded that it was not only his fight and he has a great burden of responsibility on his shoulders. ‘Yea! I will win and defend my family till my very last breath if that is the case!’

The family’s land, reputation, and future is in his hands. There was no other way than to win.

“I will head back too!” Ye Wei nodded nervous but spirited. He leaped down from the branch and walked towards his room.

“Okay!” Ye Zhong looked at the round moon, and thought about how it symbolizes family unity. He clenched his fists and swore to himself: ‘My body and my strength belong to this family.’

Being a strong young Ye had never meant as much as it did today to him. He was ready to take on the greatest obstacle he had ever seen in the seventeen years he's been alive.

Chapter 22 – Seven Star Condensed Prime

The evening passed in silence like the calm before the storm.

At the break of dawn, there were only birds and a couple of Ye family elders at the Ye family arena.

As the sun rose higher into the sky a crowd was starting to gather. The Ye family was well established in their corner of Green Moon City, but they were not the reason there was a growing crowd. The Du family had their fingers in different industries and produced countless quality fighters for around a century now and citizens were eager to see fighters from one of the Big Three families display their strength.

It was not news that Ye family's businesses had not been doing well, rumours had already been flying around for months now. The family's enemies that gathered at the arena couldn't sit at home and wait for the results, they wanted to witness it as it unfolds. On the other side a few worried families were present rooting for the Ye family and praying for a miracle.

Although it had only been three days since the decision to fight again the Du family, news travel fast in this city and the authorities were here as well to keep things in order due to the amount of rivals gathered in one place.

The audience was talking amongst themselves, their small gossip and chatter was getting louder as more and more members of the audience started to converse about their predictions and opinions.

“I don’t think the Ye family can possibly win this fight! The Du family looks prepared. I even heard that they’re after Ye’s ancestral land by North Hill Bay!”

“What? That is where their family graves are! If they lose that plot of land how would they stay influential here in Green Moon City? They would lose all face!”

“Yeah well the Ye family’s legacy is coming to an end, they only have two Condensed Prime Warriors, one of whom is a three star level and the other one is only a one star. The Du family is still relatively young but how often do you see a century old family with six Condensed Prime Warriors? Plus the strongest of them, their master Du Yuan Ming is a seven star Condensed Prime Warrior!”

“The Ye family’s younger generation can’t hold a candle to the Du family’s; I like the friendly Ye family, but, sadly, I really don’t see them winning or even having a chance!”

The audience all looked to the side of the arena as the Ye family arrived, a majestic aura lingered around Ye Zheng Qing as he looked over the crowd then sat down in front of the arena, wanting to be close to the action.

Ye Wei was way too weak to be participating today, he could only stand in the crowd and watch his uncles and aunt standing behind Ye Zheng Qing, Ye Zhong, Ye Xuan, Ye Qiu and other youngsters who will be fighting. The whole Ye family was tensed, worried about the family’s future. The contestants from the Ye family were all looking extra nervous,

being the best youngsters in the Ye family had never given them this much pressure.

Ye Wei had his head down and his fists were clenched. ‘Cousin Zhong don’t be scared by the pressure,’ Ye Wei was young, but growing up in a big family taught him that reputation was everything. If the Ye family were to fall now and scatter across the lands, it would be the end of what the family had achieved so far and they would not get any help rebuilding what they had. Other families will always put their own gains in front of everything else! Humiliation today will hurt every member of the family.

The tension in the air was palpable.

“The master of the Du family Du Yuan Ming is here, together with Ling He Merchant Guild’s president Dong Ho and general Zhou Wu!” The announcer yelled. The tension at the arena intensified.

The gossiping crowd fell silent and turned their eyes towards the entrance of the arena, awaiting the Du family camp’s arrival impatiently.

“Let them in!” Ye Zheng Qing yelled in cold rage, the veins on his arms were popping out. He mumbled to himself: “The Du family made an effort to invite those two? I guess the rumours about general Zhou and president Dong being bought was the truth after all!”

The intentions of the Du family were clear, the general and Ling He Merchant Guild’s president were here to pressure the Ye family. They wanted to seal the deal as soon as possible when they defeated the Ye according to their plan!

The arena gates suddenly opened, letting in a great amount of uniformed men. Who laid out a long red carpet at the entrance. An intimidating blood-soaked silver sword crest was embroidered into each and every one of their uniforms. They have finally arrived.

Judging by spirit, the Du family already had an advantage.

The carpet split the crowd, and Du Yuan Ming came walking in. He entered with a swagger, chatting with the crowd on both sides as if socialising is what he came here for.

Behind him to his right was a well built middle aged man in a black battle robe. His face told a bloody tale, underneath his broad forehead was a long and hideous scar across his evil looking face. General Zhou of Green Moon City was an experienced Warrior, a Seven Star Condensed Prime Warrior.

Rumour has it that general Zhou's face turned emotionless ever since the Shen dynasty decided to purge the rebel force. General Zhou was commander of the army, killing rebels hiding among civilians as well as suspicious innocents... This was the start of his cruel reputation.

On Du Yuan Ming's left was a slightly chubby man in an exquisite silk robe. He had the carefree smile of a rich man on his face and the attitude to go with it. President Dong Ho of Ling He Merchant Guild, a five star Condensed Prime Warrior.

Behind the three men leading the way were more than ten chatty teenagers, all of them with a smirk on their faces while boasting and

trashing the Ye family. They were the challengers from the Du family and some of the strongest teenagers in Green Moon City. Within the group was one of the top five strongest teens in the city: the six star Warrior Du Han Yue!

The Ye family stared at the Du family with hatred while they entered the arena. Their businesses were at the worst point they had ever been at with the last two months being especially rough.

Being poor was okay, but to live without dignity was not. As such right now protecting the family's ancestral graves was all that was on the Ye family's mind.

"Yuan Ming, do you see their faces? Apparently the Ye family hates you by the looks of it!" The chubby Dong He was amused by their aggressive postures.

"If you're not hated, then you're doing it wrong!" The master of Du family shared some life philosophy with him, "Business is war in a sense, if you lose you can't blame anyone but yourself!"

"Ha, I guess you are right to an extent. But it's not exactly fair for the Ye family now that you have Lu Feng in the boat on top of the connection your family has. Taking over their mystic scroll and arms business was a certainty from the start right?" Dong Ho had been business partners with the Du family for a while now, he more or less knew their tactics inside out.

Master Yi, Master Mu, and Master Ning were the only three Runemasters in Green Moon City. Rumour has it that Lu Feng was

Master Mu's love child.

He was master Mu's first apprentice and the main reason the Ye family's scroll and arms sales were in the dumps. He was the supplier of the Du family for this business attack.

"It's in both our family's and Lu Feng's interest, he did his part in securing our supplies and now we just need to get what he wants from the Ye's to finish the deal!" Du Yuan Ming had an evil smile on his face. Lu Feng promised to sign a thirty year supply contract if the Du family would give him the Ye family's ancestral land next to North Hill Bay!

"The Ye family doesn't have a say in this; we will deliver when our youngsters destroy their kids today!" General Zhou's deep voice had great presence. He was appointed by Lu Feng to make sure Ye Zheng Qing handed over the deed once the fight was won.

"Mister Ye, it's been three months now. You look a lot older than when we last met! You have to take care of your body, if you pass away these young ones may end up on the streets! Hahahaha!" Du Yuan Ming stared at Ye Zheng Qing and shouted, the volume of his laugh was as immense as thunder. His statement rang out and was heard clearly by every single member of the audience.

The staggering power of a seven star Condensed Prime Warrior, he broke through...

The impulse knocked everyone in the arena back a few steps, as most of the audience were ordinary Students who seldom got the chance to meet even their own family master. This was their first time witnessing a

person this highly ranked. There were only around ten people who had reached this level!

Ye Zheng Qing stood in front of the Ye family, using his Qi as a shield to protect himself and the family members behind him: “Just worry about your own problems, my aged body is in good shape it’s got at least fifty more years to go! Though I have seen stronger men than you through the years I have lived mister Du, and sadly, most of them are not alive now for some reason!”

Ye Zheng Qing’s voice did not pack as much power, but it had a penetrating quality dissolving the pressure from Du Yuan Ming’s sonic waves.

Although grandpa did all he could to shield his clan, Ye Wei who was standing away in the corner still felt the pressure, and he was too weak... His Sentient felt like it was about to be crushed under the pressure.

“No! I can’t faint here everyone else is on their feet. I can’t let Du Yuan Ming put me to my knees just by his voice!” Mental strength was the only thing keeping Ye Wei standing up, his forehead was dripping with sweat and his body was cramping.

The seven star Condensed Prime Warrior’s crushing power not only pressured Ye Wei’s body, his Sentient was suffering as well, the stinging sensation was agonising.

‘I will not give in!’ Years of being the weakest in his family had given Ye Wei an impressive iron will. That scream, that willpower came from the bottom of his heart and flipped a switch in his Sentient.

All of a sudden a golden spark was shining bright in his Sentient and created a tiny explosion, fighting back Du Yuan Ming's power!

“Bang!”

The pain made Ye Wei's face pale, but he felt stronger somehow his Sentient was expanding!

Ye Wei's Sentient took over his body, filling it with Qi and strengthening his bones and muscles; It made him a three star Student!

Ye Wei was bare conscious, but he did notice that he broke through. ‘What just happened?’ He was surprised and confused. For any other Student, cultivating would become harder once they hit seven stars having to master mystic runes. But with Ye Wei, it was the opposite for him and he knew it. When he gets to seven star level he can start using stances and gain cosmic energy from creating and refining stances due to his superior runic knowledge. Not only would he not slow down, his cultivation would speed up immensely.

‘Not long now, only four more to go then I can truly make a difference!’

Chapter 23 – Runicle

The psychological warfare started long before the official fight. Tension was high and weapons were already drawn.

Du Yuan Ming did not expect Ye Zheng Qing to talk back and his face went black. ‘Let’s see if your c*ckiness will help you hold your little plot of land, old fart!’

The servants of the Du family put a table down in the arena and three chairs around it for the patriarch, the general and the Merchant Guild president, comfort was their priority over respecting the host.

“Ye Zheng Qing, now that we have general Zhou and president Dong as witnesses, I am going to ask you one last time. Will you sell us the land by North Hill Bay?” Backed up by two powerful men, Du Yuan Ming sounded confident as he was staring at Ye Zheng Qing like a hawk at its prey. “You can still change your mind, and the Du family will forgivingly accept the troubles you made us go through and buy your ancestral land for one hundred and twenty thousand silver!”

“If you decide to be stubborn about this you will not be getting anything after the fight!”

“Wait, I will give you lot a hundred silver so you don’t end up on the streets right away, I am fair like that!” Du Yuan Ming was desperate to have the last word.

Ye Wei was furious and felt helpless, it was becoming apparent the Du

family wanted to crush them and take everything they own.

“If you lose the fight the Du family will take their fingers out of the scroll, arms, restaurant, ranch, and fabric businesses. I hope you will keep your promise!” Ye Zheng Qing knew that if they lost the morale then there would be no hope, keeping his feet on the ground and countered.

“Please!” Du Yuan Ming looked scornfully at the youngsters within the Ye family camp, he laughed and said: “Win with what? But yeah sure, I am a man of my word! Plus we have general Zhou and president Dong here as witnesses. You just have to win for us to keep our promise!” He was relaxed and confident, and didn’t really care about the details.

“Words are just words, put it on paper!” Ye Zheng Qing took out the contract he prepared, stamping his right index finger quickly on the contract. The inscribed contract flew out and stopped in front of Du Yuan Ming.

Ye Family’s trademark telekinesis skill!

“I like your attention to details, I guess I could use some security too!” Du Yuan Ming cleared his throat. He quickly scanned through the contract and then put his handprint on it without hesitation: “Ha, remember this is a deathmatch!”

Ye Zheng Qing looked at his grandchildren. He was not ready to lose any of them... Ye Zhong caught his grandpa’s worrying look, and signaled to grandpa that things will be fine with a solemn gaze.

Ye Zheng Qing stamped his cold hand on the contract, there was no way out now.

“Rules are as follows: three youngsters from each side, fighting one on one with one fight at a time, the family with the last standing contestant is the victor! Any questions?” General Zhou had a blood thirsty look as he turned and announced the rules to make sure everyone heard them clearly.

“No objections!” Ye Zheng Qing’s deep voice has sounded more confident at other occasions.

“No objections!” Du Yuan Ming on the other side sounded a lot more spirited. ‘They have absolutely no way to win... This fight is just a formality, we are taking from the Ye family no matter what!’

He stared at the Ye camp with an arrogant smile as he sent their first contestant into the arena: “Yin Hong, you’re up!” Du Han Yue was at the six star level; Du An Yi, Cheng Zhi, and Yun Fan were five star. But the strongest Ye youngster was Ye Zhong at only four stars as far as Du Yuan Ming knew, as such there was no point for the Du family to send anyone stronger than four star, revealing their power.

“Yes!” Du Yin Hong entered the arena confidently and the smile he had told everyone he carried no respect for whoever the Ye family was going to send. In his mind he had no reason to, his cultivation should allow him to better whomever he faced.

Du Han Yue was standing next to the Du Patriarch indifferently looking at the general direction of where the arena was. He was dressed

in white today and didn't think he was going to fight.

It was not tactically great to send Ye Zhong out right away because the less energy he has, the less chance he had to win against Du Han Yue. However, nobody else in the Ye camp could match Du Yin Hung's four star cultivation.

Ye Zheng Qing felt dejected, slowly accepting the cruel reality that the Ye family was facing, wondering if he had done something different in the past would the family still be bullied like this? Would his kids be stronger?

“Whiz~”

Ye Zheng Qing's thoughts got interrupted by the noise of a grand looking carriage approaching the arena. It left a trail of dust behind it and the glimmering runes around the carriage became more visible as it got closer.

“Is that a runicle?”

Ye Zheng Qing was startled ‘Do they have even more back up? This time arriving by a runicle too!?’ In the other camp Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Mu, and Dong Ho looked surprised as well.

The crowd started speculating.

“Could it be the City Lord? Or is it someone from the Runemaster Union?”

Only a handful of powerful people traveled by runicle; another person known to own a runicle was South Star Academy's principal.

The runicle stopped by the side of the arena and everyone admired the exquisitely built machine while its blue jade body was reflecting the morning sun. A familiar figure walked out of the runicle gracefully in front of the loud and shocked crowd.

“Zi Yan!” Ye Wei shouted soon as he recognized who the graceful figure belonged to. He was gobsmacked.

The crowd went quiet as Zi Yan walked towards the arena, every pair of eyes were waiting to see what this mysterious teenage girl's next move was going to be.

Her green dress flowed like a willow in the summer breeze, her crystal clear eyes were set on the pale kid who was standing close to the Ye camp. Her flowing hair covered parts of her face, but it none the less caught everyone's attention. She still looked a bit childlike but she somehow had the beauty of a woman.

“Who is this beauty?” All the young men were looking at her and temporarily forgot they were here to watch a fight.

‘How do I not know who this is?!’ Du Han Yue was crazed by the hormones in his system, he couldn't take his eyes off Lin Zi Yan as she was about to walk past him.

‘The pretty face and the elegance, this kind of classiness is what I want in a girl!’

Du Han Yue was agitated, he adjusted his shirt and cleared his throat before he walked up to Zi Yan.

With a warm and friend smile on his face, he introduced himself to the girl of his dreams: “Pleased to meet you, I am Du Han Yue from the Du family, one of Green Moon City’s Big Three.”

Lin Zi Yan registered his words but decided to ignore him. She looked at Du Han Yue for a second then faced forward again continuing on her course.

Chapter 24 – From Whom?

Du Han Yue's hand was left hanging, his smile becoming stiff. He could not believe what just happened. When he returned to reality, he embarrassingly pulled his hand back to his body. His face was bright red as if it's just been slapped.

A hostile look replaced his fake smile as Du Han Yue stared at Zi Yan's back. If she didn't walk out of a runicle, he would probably have walked up to her and slapped her.

The strongest teenager in the Du family usually didn't get ignored in any circumstances unless he was asked to be left alone!

'Who is this young girl? And what's with the runicle? She is definitely not an ordinary girl...' Grandpa Ye Zheng Qing was wondering what business this mysterious girl had here at the arena on the morning of this big fight.

Ye Wei was the only one in the family who knew Zi Yan and even he did not know her intention. Let alone the rest of the family. They were getting increasingly confused and anxious as Zi Yan got closer, especially Ye Zheng Qing, he did not want the situation to get worse than it already is.

"Good morning Patriarch Ye!" Lin Zi Yan politely greeted Ye Zheng Qing with a bow. From how well she presented herself Ye Zheng Qing could tell that this was no ordinary girl. She started searching for someone in the crowd as her sweet voice like an angel's faded into the

crowd's noise.

Lin Zi Yan looked excited like she had some news to share.

"Hey little girl, are you looking for someone?" Ye Zheng Qing was pretty sure she meant no harm by now, but still, he would like to know what she was after as by the looks of it she was looking for someone from the Ye family... This small disruption actually got his mind off the stress he was under.

'Does anyone know this girl here?'

"I am looking for Ye Wei." She answered. There were too many people standing in front of Ye Wei, and despite her greatest efforts she could not see him.

"For whom?"

The Ye family camp was speechless. It was obvious this mysterious little girl had some powerful connections, and she's looking for Ye Wei?

It would make more sense if she was here for Ye Zhong as he does have some admirers and she could be here to support him knowing how important this fight was. No, not even Ye Zhong was in this girl's league.

Here for *Ye Wei* !?

For what the family knew, Ye Wei was still a underachieving one star

Student with no talent. Probably his red Sentient was the reason for him being at the one star level for three years despite South Star Academy's reputation. And now a girl like this was somehow connected to Ye Wei? None of it made any sense to them.

“M... Zi Yan, why are you here?” Ye Wei was still not use to not calling her miss, he slowly walked out of the crowd and answered.

‘Zi Yan? So this is the substitute teacher little Wei was talking about so much? That Zi Yan?’ Ye Zhong was surprised, he knew who she was now, but seeing her in person was another thing altogether. He never imagined her to be this young, graceful, and elegant. On top of her looks, her good manners indicated she was brought up by a great family.

‘No wonder why little Wei seemed to be getting over Joe Yin’s betrayal so well. Having a great person who cares about you certainly helps, and Joe Yin does not even look half as good!’ Ye Zhong was glad his little cousin had someone like that on his side and wondered what she was doing here.

Wei’s dad Ye Yi and gramps were the most shocked out of the lot. ‘What’s between those two?’ They stared at Ye Wei waiting for them to speak.

“Ye, I thought were going to fight? Can people who have no business here just get out of the way!” Du Han Yue was extremely displeased that he got ignored, he shouted out of anger.

Zi Yan answered him with a frown on her face, sighing she gave Du Han Yue a cold look. “Hasn’t anyone taught you how to behave in public?

Interrupting is considered rude.”

‘Rude? You have to be joking right? You’re here for you petty little crush while making a fool of yourself, and you’re calling me rude?’ Du Han Yue was about to give Zi Yan a lecture on how to behave in public.

The Du Patriarch spotted something and that something gave him chill. Du Yuan Ming was trying to find clues that would tell him who this little girl was and as his eyes were darting around that’s when he noticed something on Zi Yan’s dress. There was a tiny tulip embroidery, though it was only thumb sized. Being a seven star Condensed Prime Warrior gave him extraordinary vision and while everyone else was admiring Zi Yan’s beauty, Du Yue Ming saw what they couldn’t see.

‘A tulip... It can’t be them, right?’ Du Yue Ming did not want to take any risks and he placed his hand on Han Yue’s shoulder signaling him to hold his tongue. There is time and place to speak up but this was not one of them.

‘They can wipe us out without even revealing themselves Han Yue, just let it go... No, actually, they can take Green Moon City from the shadows if they really wanted to; we can’t afford to make them our enemy they are too dangerous.’

Du Han Yue was puzzled about why his dad would care so much about this little girl. But he was an obedient son, he got the signal so he stopped. ‘Yea, maybe I should just focus on the fight.’

Out of the the corner of his eyes, Ye Zheng Qing caught the Du Patriarch holding his son back. He looked at Zi Yan again curiously.

“Wei, let’s go!” Zi Yan broke the silence as everyone else was talking and guessing what the relationship between Zi Yan and Ye Wei was. “Master Yi is waiting for us!” She didn’t say it loud, but the Ye family could hear every word. As for everyone further away, they could only see her smile and her cherry lips moving.

“Now? But...” Ye Wei looked towards the arena and frowned the fight was about to start and he wanted to stay and support his family. Du Xian Hung was impatiently waiting.

He knew his presence would not mean much, but he wanted to be there to support his family mentally in critical moments like this, an extra friendly face around the arena might make a difference.

It was hard to leave his family behind, especially leaving Ye Zhong behind because they had developed a very tight bond over the past few days.

Ye Wei froze for a few moments. I’ve helped cousin Zhong refine three stances but Du Han Yue is a six star Warrior... I want to be here and see my cousin fight and tell him to get himself out of the arena if it gets bloody.’

“Hey, it’s a very rare window of opportunity. I have no idea when Master Yi will have time for you again after this morning so please come with me!” Lin Zi Yan didn’t know the story behind this fight, and how it would affect the integrity of Ye family, she thought it was just a friendly sparring match.

“But...” Ye Wei was still hesitant. Although Ye Zhong had the element of surprise on his side with the Blazing Horned Tiger’s Assault, he could still lose and in the worst case could lose his life. Ye Wei knew because he would do the same: give his last breath defending the family’s name. And he wants to be there to drag Ye Zhong out of this exact situation if it shall happen. ‘I don’t want to go...’

“Did I hear right? Master Yi wants to see Ye Wei? What is going on?” The Ye family was discussing between themselves.

Everyone knew the most influential person in Green Moon City was not the City Lord, in fact it wasn’t anyone who lived in the castle. It was Master Yi.

With his infamous weird temper and busy schedule he remained pretty mysterious outside his close circle. Even the Big Three and the city’s officials do not really know much about him.

Ye Zhong walked up to Ye Wei, patted his shoulder and said quietly: “Wei, this is your chance and our chance, you can not let this one slip! If Master Yi likes you you might be able to get him to come here and solve this mess for you!”

“Cousin Zhong...” Ye Wei wanted to say a lot of things, mainly his worries.

“Stop being a little girl and go!” Ye Zhong interrupted him and gave him a push towards Zi Yan.

Ye Wei grinded his teeth: “Zi Yan, I’ll go with you!!” He saw the bigger picture in the end.

Zi Yan was confused by Ye Wei’s indecisiveness, it is great honor for anyone, but Ye Wei seemed hesitant to meet Master Yi.

“Go son don’t make him wait!” Ye Yi also patted Ye Wei’s shoulder. He could feel the cousin duo was hiding something. They had been hanging out a lot lately and now Ye Zhong seemed to be the only person in the arena who had any idea about what was going on.

It seemed a little suspicious, but it was a possible way out of the Ye family’s sticky situation, therefore nobody tried to stop him from leaving.

“I will be back as soon as possible!” Ye Wei took a deep breath and decided to take the opportunity. ‘If I can befriend Master Yi and get him to come save us...’

“Zi Yan, I am ready!” They headed to the runicle side by side.

Not long after they entered the runicle shone bright, primal energy lifted the runicle into the air as the runes lit up. Turbulence picked up some sand and stones as the blue and green runicle flew a hundred meters away in the matter of seconds.

Chapter 25 – Ye Wei’s Talent

Ye Zheng Qing was left puzzled as the runicle flew away, and it was at this moment that he realised how little he knew about what his grandson was doing these days.

“Zhong, you know something about this little girl and what she has to do with little Wei?” Asked Ye Hai with a deep frown, Ye Zhong is usually not the kind of kid who hides information from his family.

Grandpa looked at him demandingly, the family longed for an explanation to their relationship.

“Actually little Wei has phenomenal soul sensitivity. His talent was discovered by one of his substitute teachers recently, and because of this his substitute teacher is going to introduce him to Master Yi to possibly become an apprentice Runemaster!” Under the intense social pressure, Ye Zhong felt a bit guilty for not being transparent and open as such he could no longer hide it. There was no point hiding it now either everyone knew Ye Wei was heading to Master Yi’s place. He missed his chance to tell the good news to the elders himself.

Ye Yi had always been a caring father and tried to be there for his son, so this news surprised him greatly and also shamed him a little. He felt like he did not know anything about his son!

Ye Yi was not the only person who looked surprised, the rest of the family was staring at Ye Zhong, speechless and struggling to believe what they just heard.

‘Every child in the Ye family deserves the same opportunities.’ This had always been Ye Zheng Qing’s motto; he always tried to be fair with attention and resource distribution no matter how limited they were. But there were too many children in the Ye family, and he had to compromise his values for the families new policies to protect their future first. So he ended up focusing more time and resources on the kids who showed more talent.

Ye Wei grew up in the shadows of everyone else, outside of the attention of the family. The family expected nothing from him and his red Sentient, so Ye Wei got used to their uncaring attitudes. The family couldn’t imagine he grew so much and became the child who surpassed the expectations placed on them the most out of all of kids of the Yu family.

“A Runemaster with his Sentient?” Ye Wei wasn’t even expected to become a Warrior. “Nevermind the details, we could have a Runemaster in the family soon!” Ye Zheng Qing’s voice trembled, he could not describe in words how excited he was.

Ye Hai too was slightly ashamed: “I scolded him pretty hard the other night for not training hard enough...” Why didn’t he just tell me he has been doing his best and actually achieved something incredible?

“Dad, it’s okay he’s a boy, but a mature one. Little Wei understands you just want what’s best for him!” Ye Zhong smiled, he was proud of who Ye Wei was becoming.

Ye Yi started to tear up, Joe Wan and him had gotten a few white hairs

over the years worrying about Ye Wei's talent. All the worry and bitterness just turned into hope and good wishes, they were relieved to hear that their son had a bright future ahead of him.

Ye Zheng Qing calmed down a little. Having a Runemaster in the family would help solve many problems the family was facing, not only can Ye Wei become the next patriarch, he could also be the key to the Ye family reaching new heights! He looked across at the Du camp with a clenched fist determined to protect his family and hold things together. Buying time for Ye Wei now was the most important task, everything would be fine once he was with Master Yi!

Du Yuan Ming stared at the the spirited Ye camp and he heard Master Yi's name mentioned.

‘Ye Zheng Qing had already stamped the contract, when we crush them in this fight there will be no turning back, there is nothing Master Yi can do!’

“Master Yi was known for his weird temper and being a hermit who doesn't interfere with personal disputes. He will not interrupt a mere fight, who cares about the Ye family anyway?”

He thought it was naive for the Ye family to put their faith in Master Yi, and their misplaced faith will be meaningless against Lu Feng's plans to get ahold of their ancestral land.

“Brother Ye, the contestant from the Du family is already standing in the middle of the arena, how long will you keep us waiting? Are you scared?” Du Yuan Ming taunted, wanting to get this done with soon as

possible.

Ye Zheng Qing frowned, the three strongest youngsters on their side were Ye Zhong, Ye Qiu, and Ye Yuan. And only Ye Zhong could match Du Xian Hong's four stars. 'It's a shame we didn't spend more time and resources on Ye Wei, he could be fighting for us today... Hope we will get through this for our families sake, our future, and I want to make it up to that boy!'

"Gramps, let me fight. I might not be able to win, but I can waste his energy and set it up as an easy fight for cousin Zhong! This is the only way!" Ye Yuan was staring at the center of the arena, thinking it would not be an easy fight.

"Gramps there's no point. Du Xian Hong is going to toy with Yuan and will probably kill him... I will deal with this on my own!" Ye Zhong stepped up and walked in front of Ye Yuan.

"No gramps, let me!" Ye Qiu also stepped up, determined to do what she could for the family.

Grandpa was proud of how the three strongest youngsters want to work as a team to wear the Du family down, it was obvious they put the family's honor in front of everything else. It was not a hard decision, but it was hard to actually send any of these kids out into the arena.

"Yuan, do your best!"

"It will be a game of hit and run, Yuan attack quick and then move back

to safety. Waste Du Xian Hong's energy as much as possible, make him reveal as much as possible. Make him slower and weaker. Do your best!"

"Yes!" Ye Yuan nodded, his baby face showed nothing but focus and determination as he walked up to his opponent with his head held high.

The crowd went quiet, this was history in the making.

The runicle was large and spacious ten meters long, as well as tall and wide. The shining green runes on the surface decorated it elegantly, taking the green from the structure and flying around the runicle like little stones of emerald. It almost looked like a little temple from a distance.

Though it was flat in the front, the ride was smooth because some of the runes were redirecting the turbulence and drag around the vehicle, Zi Yan and Ye Wei could not feel they were in motion at all.

The interior was luxurious; the seats and floor were covered by exquisite ferret pelts, by the seat was an elegant table crafted with the highest quality of amboine. But none of this concerned Ye Wei, his mind was still in the arena with his family!

'Du Xian Hung is a four star Warrior, Ye Qiu, and Ye Yuan shouldn't risk themselves, but it's already a tight fight between cousin Zhong and Du Han Yue. If we were to start with cousin Zhong we won't be able to win in the end... What can be done?' The win condition for Ye family is

basically for Ye Zhong to finish the first two Du contestants without showing his five star cultivation and the refined stances, if he could somehow do that and still have enough Qi while not being injured, Ye Zhong could win. But the problem is, Ye Zhong would have to fight three people which is practically impossible.

Ye Wei was confused and restless, thinking about the best scenario and ways out of this crisis for the Ye family.

“Ye Wei, are you okay? Looks like you have something on your mind?” Lin Zi Yan asked casually hoping to get an honest answer. She was not stupid and could see Ye Wei was preoccupied. For the whole ride Ye Wei was looking worried.

It was very common in Green Moon City, and even the rest of the empire, for different families to have sparring matches every so often, she had no idea what the Du family and the Ye family were fighting for.

“It’s nothing...” Ye Wei shook his head pretended nothing was wrong. The Du family, is in the end, one of the biggest establishments in Green Moon City, now that they have joined forces with general Zhou and president Dong Ye Wei he thought ‘Even if Lin Zi Yan seemed to have some influence she wouldn’t be able to do much about it.’

Master Yi was Ye Wei’s only hope!

Slowly realising he would be a key part of the family’s future, Ye Wei needed a confidence boost “Zi Yan, do you think Master Yi will accept me as a disciple?”

Chapter 26 – Entry Exam

“I was able to refer you to him but to become his apprentice is not an easy task, it’s very much up to you. Your performance will be the deciding factor.” Lin Zi Yan’s well defined eyebrows moved as she answered, this meeting was a serious matter to Zi Yan because it was her who discovered Ye Wei’s talent and as such her duty to follow up.

Zi Yan was under the impression Ye Wei was acting nervous and weird because of their meeting with Master Yi, “If I were you I wouldn’t worry too much.” She tried to calm his nerves. “Your soul sensitivity is very strong, I would even say it’s close to a qualified Runemaster’s level. You are young and may not have sufficient knowledge on runes. You need to be familiar with about seventy-two volumes worth of runic knowledge before becoming a Runemaster. I guess for now that’s what you have to focus the most on. But I’m sure if you’re going to study under Master Yi, he will go through the “Sacred Rune Anthology” with you himself, coupled with his training you will become a Runemaster for sure!”

Lin Zi Yan had a relaxed smile on her face as she placed her hand behind Ye Wei’s shoulder then winked at him.

She could only do so much to encourage him when she didn’t know what his concerns were. For Ye Wei though meeting Master Yi was something far bigger than himself because his future was not as important as the family’s.

In the Zhou dynasty, Runemasters were very rare, the amount of Runemasters has decreased over the years. The influentials noticed the trend and therefore will do anything to befriend them and try not to get

on their bad side because they need the Runemasters more than the Runemasters need them.

“I will do my best!” After a lot of thinking, Ye Wei realized the best thing he could do was get Master Yi’s approval, to befriend the Runemaster!

‘If I perform phenomenally and am nice, Master Yi might like me on a personal level! Then I can ask him to help us!’

The runicle was nimble, it traveled through half of Green Moon City in the time it would take you to finish a cup of tea. They stopped next to a small mountain near the edge of town.

Mount Yu Ying was just tall enough to be called a mountain, but citizens always remembered it as a taller mountain than it really was because of who lived there.

On the top of the mountain inside a forest of purple bamboo sat a cottage made from bamboo, next to the cottage was a minimalistic courtyard and some open space where the runicle parked itself.

“We’re here!”

Lin Zi Yan exited the runicle leisurely followed by the anxious Ye Wei.

“Master Yi lives here?” Ye Wei was in awe this place could not look any more ordinary.

In Ye Wei's mind, Master Yi was a god like figure, mysterious and untouchable. An influential person who lives in massive palace, not the ruins that were in front of him. It was the complete opposite of what he had imagined.

A dull small mountain, a messy courtyard, and a simple bamboo house, how can anyone with standards live here?

“Master Yi!” Lin Zi Yan stood in front of the courtyard and called for the Runemaster with a loud a clear voice.

“Boom!”

As Zi Yan's words left her mouth, sounds of a vigorous explosion came from the purple bamboo house followed by someone falling on the doorsteps. The unkempt old man in rags screamed as he clumsily ran into the courtyard. “Ouch!”

“Failure! Failure again! I don't remember creating a mid level Myst stance being this hard!” The old man spoke to himself as he dug his fingers through his loose hair, scratching his scalp.

“Master Yi!” The Runemaster's disarray made Lin Zi Yan embarrassed. She put her palm on her face and laughed awkwardly at Ye Wei.

Ye Wei could not believe his eyes. ‘This sloppy guy is Master Yi? His face looks like an old shoe!’

This was in no way how Ye Wei expected it, he's a dirty geezer!

"Hey cutie, when did you get here?" He finally noticed Zi Yan's arrival and looked at the two with a silly grin on his face.

"Just now actually, this is Ye Wei the boy I spoke to you about!" Zi Yan smiled back and introduced the Master to Yi Wei, entering the house as they spoke.

"Greetings! Master Yi!" Ye Wei immediately bowed down respectfully.

Master Yi's face turned straight all of a sudden, and he stared at Ye Wei with a penetrating gaze. Ye Wei felt a shiver go down his spine, he felt completely transparent. He gained respect for the Runemaster, this kind of presence he just felt was extraordinary.

"Impressive soul sensitivity!" Satisfied by what he was looking at Master Yi gave him a nod of approval.

"This cutie here said you refined Triple Tidal Palm, and that there is now a mid level Spirit version of the stance?" Master Yi asked Ye Wei openly while he looked at Ye Wei carefully from head to toe as if it was some kind of inspection.

"You relied solely on your soul sensitivity when you upgraded the stance right? That is a good start!"

"Humm, I should test your runic knowledge and rune consonance before anything else. Soul sensitivity alone can't count as a good

foundation if you want me to train you!” Master Yi played with his patchy beard as he spoke.

“Rune consonance?” Ye Wei hesitated, he has never heard of this term before.

“That’s right, to become a Runemaster you need all three to be at a high level!”

“The most valuable trait of a Runemaster is the ability to create stances. How well one can manipulate runes and how much energy you can get out of the runes is determined by your rune consonance level. If you can’t manipulate them and unleash the runes power you can’t possible create anything and there will be no point continuing if your consonance is bad!

“But Master Yi, Ye Wei is not a seven star Student yet, he doesn’t have enough Qi to draw runes!” Lin Zi Yan was concerned about her student’s future.

“Don’t worry about that, I have a method!” Master Yi giggled. As a Runemaster he had many special tricks up his sleeves!

Ye Wei was getting increasingly nervous, not even knowing what rune consonance was before being tested on it; he felt he was out of his depth.

“This is the Runemaster apprenticeships entry exam from last year. I will give you six hours to do as much as you can. I would like to see what level your runic knowledge is at from the result.”

Master Yi looked around his desk and found a thick stack of books which he then passed to Ye Wei.

“Okay!” Ye Wei nodded, he quickly took the stack of books off Master Yi’s hands, time was of the essence, his cousins’ lives were at risk back home in the arena.

Ye Wei didn’t wait, he picked up the books and started right away. After reading the first question he immediately froze...

Chapter 27 – Peerless

Were the questions difficult?

All the questions on the paper were all written by Master Yi himself and he was very strict when it came to recruiting a new apprentice. The questions were designed to be challenging even for experienced scholars who have been studying runes for decades.

Seeing how Ye Wei froze up, Lin Zi Yan frowned and was getting a bit nervous. ‘What is going on? Is it too hard for him?’

They should not be easy, but he should be able to pick a couple easy questions and write a couple of lines!

Lin Zi Yan looked straight at Ye Wei while she was gripping her hand tightly, hoping Ye Wei would be able to handle the pressure; there was faith in her bright eyes.

Master Yi thought Ye Wei was still a bit too young. No matter how strong his soul sensitivity was it would not make up for his lack of runic knowledge.. Master Yi wanted to humble Ye Wei with this impossible challenge so he would become an obedient apprentice and focus on learning.

“If you want to become a Runemaster you have to develop not only your soul sensitivity, but runic knowledge, and consonance all at the same speed with no exceptions. There is no simple and easy path!” Master Yi said calmly he had assessed thousands, if not tens of thousands, of

youngsters and every one of them was gifted and extraordinarily intelligent. However, there were only a few of them who could satisfy his high standards, satisfy but nothing more.

Ye Wei was calm and collected, he expected himself not to know the answers to all the questions that was normal and acceptable for a thirteen year old.

However that wasn't the case, as Ye Wei looked through the questions, the golden spark appeared in his Sentient again, the answers to the questions suddenly appeared from deep inside his mind where all kind of runic knowledge was etched not long ago from that strange dream.

He naturally picked up his pen and his writing hand flew over the sheets, composing line after line of information he was aware of.

Answering the questions exposed him to other perspectives than what he knew about runes, and he slowly started to understand the purpose of every curve and line of different rune.

'I wonder if they have started fighting yet... hope nobody is hurt!' Ye Wei was completely focused on the task at hand.

'Hang in there cousins! I will come back with help very very soon!' Ye Wei held his pen with a tight grip and resumed answering the questions swiftly.

His eyes were glued to the exam while his hands were writing sentence after sentence at an incredible speed.

Master Yi was saddened by the scene and he shook his head in disappointment. He was starting to think Ye Wei was just scrawling in a panic.

It would take around two hours for a qualified Runemaster to answer all these questions, but judging by Ye Wei's speed he would have the whole thing done in around ten minutes. In Master Yi's mind, Ye Wei was just scribbling irrelevant nonsense.

It's okay if you don't know the answer, you don't have to embarrass yourself even further...

Master Yi could not bear to witness it any longer. He closed his eyes and started thinking about how to finish creating the Myst stance he was earlier working on. He didn't want to read what Ye Wei was writing down.

Zi Yan was aware of Master Yi's indifference, she smiled bitterly and let out a reluctant sigh. It was obvious the master was not satisfied with Ye Wei.

Lin Zi Yan headed towards Ye Wei and took a peek at the answers on his sheet, she had no idea what Ye Wei was saying at all.

"Master Yi, please take a look!" It didn't take Ye Wei very long before he put his pen down on the table, he exhaled relaxingly as he finished. After stacking the answer sheets into a tidy pile, he respectfully handed them to Master Yi.

“Sure!” Master Yi responded casually, he was still in his own world of runes and stances, and didn’t really show any interest to his surroundings especially because he assumed Ye Wei was writing nonsense.

Ye Wei didn’t appreciate the apathy as he stared at Master Yi in confusion he then turned his head towards Zi Yan, ‘Why isn’t he checking my papers?’ Trying to telepathically ask Zi Yan if he was usually this cold.

“Master Yi! Fire!” Lin Zi Yan finally did something about it.

“Hey cutie, what’s up” Master Yi snapped out of his daydream and looked innocently at Zi Yan.

“Ye Wei just finished!” Zi Yan said.

“Already?” Master Yi managed to articulate while being stunned for a moment. Taking the papers from Ye Wei’s hands, “If there was anything you didn’t understand while answering the questions, you should write them down on a note while you still remember them and do some research on the topics. The body of runic knowledge as vast and deep as the ocean, you will find yourself still learning something new when you’re decades into studying. You’re still young, use your time well...”

Master Yi stopped talking mid-word and open his eyes wide as he started flipping through the pages and checking the answers. He shivered and his hands started shaking.

‘The first answer is correct!’

‘The second one, correct!’

‘The third... fourth... fifth... are correct!’

Master Yi squinted his eyes in disbelief as he scanned through the pages, his mouth slowly opened subconsciously.

“Uhh, how is this possible!?”

Curious and shocked, Master Yi went through the answer sheets as quick as he could, not only did he not spot any mistakes the answer Ye Wei wrote were very precise and well structured, they were perfect!

Master Yi could not believe his eyes, he flipped through the pages back and forth, carefully re-checking the whole thing three times before he gently place the answer sheets on the table then suspiciously looked at Ye Wei.

An ordinary Runemaster would need two hours to answer these questions with mistakes here and there, but a mere thirteen year old child took only ten minutes to answer the whole thing perfectly. It was absolute madness!

“Master Yi, what’s wrong?” Seeing Master Yi’s complicated facial expression, Lin Zi Yan was worried for Ye Wei.

Ye Wei too turned his head towards Master Yi, he was pretty confident, but in the end it was more or less effortless for him to finish the task.

Ye Wei's heart was racing while he looked at Master Yi's strange facial expression. He desperately wanted the Runemaster's approval so hopefully he could make an impact on the crisis his family was facing, with the aid of the ultimate power in Green Moon City.

"Are you not just thirteen? This is very strange?" Master Yi gave Ye Wei a weird look again trying to remember himself when he was thirteen, even the talented child he was could not have done what Ye Wei just accomplished.

'His soul sensibility is ridiculous and with this kind of understanding of runes... Even with mediocre consonance this kid is a rare find. He can shine bright like a diamond with a little polishing!'

Genius are always very hard to fathom.

"Ye Wei, you were born to be a Runemaster! This kind of powerful soul sensitivity is rare, despite that I have seen it before, but your understanding about the nature of runes is peerless, if you're not going to become a Runemaster you are wasting your life!" Master Yi was emotional, he just found the disciple of a lifetime.

Chapter 28 – Flaming Golden Lotus Stance

Lin Zi Yan had never witnessed Master Yi complimenting anyone. After the shock and processing the situation, a joyful smile shone from her face. Then she quickly walked up to Master Yi.

“Master Yi, how did he do?” Zi Yan asked curiously, with that beautiful smile her face looked even prettier than it usually did.

“To my standards, he answered perfectly! I definitely underestimated him in the end. It’s unbelievable how much he knows about runes considering he has only been living for thirteen years!” Master Yi exclaimed, when he was thirteen his understanding of runes was elementary!

This was the standard entry exam of Master Yi’s on runic knowledge. From experience, youths ages twenty to thirty would be lucky if they answered sixty percent of the questions correctly and the people who could reach seventy percent were considered geniuses.

Last year when Master Yi recruited apprentices, there were thirty-eight candidates in total. Only four people got sixty percent on the entry exam and nobody reached seventy percent.

Ye Wei answered all the questions perfectly and with incredible speed on top of his accuracy!

“Ye Wei, what will happen now is that I am going to test your rune consonance, with your soul sensitivity and runic knowledge, if your

conscience is not too shabby then I will be able to do something with you!” Master Yi smiled at Ye Wei, it had been quite a while since Master Yi was enthusiastic about a candidate. He who was usually calm and collected could not wait to test Ye Wei’s rune consonance.

As the Runemaster mentioned, to become a Runemaster Ye Wei would need soul sensibility, runic knowledge, and rune consonance. Without anyone of the three, it was not possible to become a Runemaster!

“Sure!” Ye Wei nodded, he was confident at this point due to the praise, he just wanted to get the formality done with and ask Master Yi for help. He was way more relaxed now that he had two out of three topics covered aced.

“Ye Wei, you can do it!” Lin Zi Yan clenched her little fist and cheered for Ye Wei.

This was the last step!

“Thanks Zi Yan!”

Ye Wei smiled and nodded his eyes sparkling with confidence.

“I know you have a red Sentient, but you should not worry about these small details. Sentient is not that important to us, Runemasters, it wouldn’t be a problem even if your Sentient was black!” Master Yi stared at Ye Wei, his eyes flashing inside his black irises you could faintly see runes appearing, decomposing then reassembling. Suddenly the room was filled with the master’s majestic invisible energy.

Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan felt as if they were two little rafts drifting in an ocean of runes.

Astounding power! It was a lot denser than a seven star Condensed Prime Warrior's energy Du Patriarch made Ye Wei experience just a while ago!

Though Master Yi's real power should be even more monstrous than this!

Then the unthinkable happened. The ceiling was covered by phantoms of blooming golden lotuses. A grand and mysterious monastery was vaguely visible in another dimension behind the curtain of flowers, and a loud bell chime could be heard.

Is this the Mythical Holy Conservatory? It was a belief that only the most powerful Runemasters could summon the Conservatory and seems like Master Yi maybe one of them!

This is the Flaming Golden Lotus Stance, it was passed down from the Holy Conservatory to test one's rune consonance. Its purpose is to physically express the performer's potential therefore it was not a graded stance.

"This test is very simple, I just need you to focus when you perform this stance, if three flaming lotuses appear, it's a pass; if four appear it's a distinction; if five or above appear I will give you a kiss!" Master Yi looked at Ye Wei and started sketching in the air using will-force and Qi on his finger as ink.

In no time, Master Yi finished drawing eighty-one runes. They were quietly floating in the air and shone with golden brilliance as Qi passed through them, remolding the runes into four glamourous golden lotuses. They were on fire and the heat wave quickly diffused, filling up the room!

Master Yi's Flaming Golden Lotus Stance bloomed four lotuses, his rune consonance belonged to the high level; it was nothing too exceptional, but it got him to where his was today. Consonance is something that does not get better alongside one's cultivation, what you are born with will stay the same for the rest of your life!

"Ye Wei, now it is your turn!" Master Yi placed his hand on Ye Wei's shoulder, lending Ye Wei Qi from his seemingly bottomless dantian. Ye Wei felt extremely energised and sensitive to his surrounding, so this was what it feels like to be powerful.

Lending Qi to others is one of the tricks only Runemasters can do.

This is the only way Ye Wei could perform a stance without reaching seven star Student level!

"Okay!" Ye Wei nodded again. This time though he did it with a straight face. He was completely focused while observing the eighty-one floating runes.

Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale...

Ye Wei's body undulated at the speed he was breathing, it was faster

than normal due to his nerves. Performing the Flaming Golden Lotus stance was the last obstacle he needed to tackle before becoming Master Yi's apprentice.

He could not wait to show everyone; gramps who was stressed, his strict but caring big uncle, his protective parents, that he was worth something to the family. And now is the critical moment, if he can save the family by bringing Master Yi to the arena it would be the best contribution anyone could give the family!

He always wanted to be a functional member, ever since the entry exam when he learned about his red Sentient, the thought had been implanted deep in his mind. Three lotuses, that was all he needed to become who he wanted to be.

He studied the eighty-one golden runes Master Yi drew carefully, then he closed his eyes and made sure he remembers every changes and turn of the sequence. He started to draw rune after rune.

He kept a very slow pace, he was paying attention to every single detail as if his life depended on it; it took him a long while before finishing!

All three people present in the room were holding their breath as the eighty-first rune was drawn.

How many?

Lin Zi Yan wanted the best for him, whereas Master Yi was just curious and Ye Wei just wanted to save his family's future; they wanted different

things but they were all desperate to see the result.

“Bup, bup, bup...”

Ye Wei's heart was beating like crazy, he could hear his own heartbeat while staring at the runes he just drew. He felt like time had stopped, just staring and hoping he would get at least three lotuses.

Chapter 29 – Master Yi's Dilemma

Inhale, exhale...

Heartbeats and breathing were the only things audible in the quiet room.

The eighty-one runes were still floating in the air as time passed, nothing happened. The 'runes were stationary and there was no Qi flow at all!

Not even one golden lotus had bloomed.

Drops of sweat started to appear on Ye Wei's forehead as he was staring at the eighty-one runes and feeling helpless while swallowing his saliva.

The sound of Ye Wei's heavy breathing remained the only audible sound in the room, five breaths...ten breaths had passed!

The runes remained the same, no signs of it turning into a stance!

"How is this possible?!" Master Yi opened his eyes wide and looked at the eight-one runes Ye Wei left floating in the air. He checked the sequence three times from start to finish.

The sequence itself contained no mistakes and it was identical to what Master Yi drew, but there were no golden lotuses, why didn't it work?

This was too weird!

Even ordinary Warriors who had no potential to become Runemasters would be able to make one or two lotuses appear when they perform the Flaming Golden Lotus stance!

“What is going on?” Zi Yan was also shocked by the motionless set of runes in the air. What does this mean? This indicated Ye Wei’s rune consonance was non-existent. Even if he becomes a seven star Student, had enough Qi and will-force he would not be able to perform a stance! There were a few good stories of red Sentient fighters with a good ending, namely Supreme Chen Feng who became a household name. But it seems Ye Wei’s story would not end as gloriously.

“...No flaming lotuses at all... Does that mean my consonance level is zero?” There was an extremely bitter, self-deprecating smile on Ye Wei’s childish face.

Ye Wei went through a couple of possible outcomes before drawing the rune, hoping that at least one lotus would bloom, and of course he would be happy with more. But never did he think it would turn out like this... Master Yi had experimented with non-cultivators in the past and even the most ordinary townsfolk could make one lotus appear. It was less than one in a hundred thousand chance that a cultivator had zero rune consonance.

Guess Ye Wei was a rare catch!

This was so unfair!

Why give me hope if I was destined to fail! Ye Wei was heartbroken; he was screaming and crying in his mind, bottomless sorrow could be felt by looking in his eyes.

Lin Zi Yan looked at Master Yi and wanted an explanation, but he didn't say a word. All he did was shaking his head in disappointment. He thought he had found a huge gemstone with potential, but it turned out to be a piece of broken glass.

"Ye Wei, be strong!" Lin Zi Yan sighed, she was worried for Ye Wei because of how fragile she assumed he was. She slowly walked up to him and placed her delicate hand on Ye Wei's shoulder patting him.

"It's not a big deal that you can't perform a stance with your runic knowledge and soul sensitivity, you will be respected. I assume it will be easy for you to help some Runemasters with their projects!"

"Even if you can't perform stances and you can't train I swear on my family's honor that I will not let anyone wrong you!" Lin Zi Yan continued trying to comfort him.

"On your family's honor?" Master Yi looked at the tulip that was embroidered onto Zi Yan's robe. Ye Wei didn't understand what Zi Yan's promise meant but Master Yi most certainly did. He knew very well how old and deeply etched into society her family was, and how they respect and honor allies. 'Zi Yan and this boy get along that well?'

"Sigh! Such a shame!" Master Yi looked disappointedly at Ye Wei, his runic knowledge and soul sensitivity were already at the right level, if it

were not for his consonance Master Yi was confident he could make Ye Wei a Runemaster in less than three years. He was getting excited just thinking about being the teacher of a sixteen year old genius!

Who would have thought Ye Wei's rune consonance was this terrible, bad enough to make his excellent rune knowledge and soul sensitivity useless.

Ye Wei clenched his fists because the situation was not great but at least it was better than what he had before the dream. Ye Wei's eyes showed determination, despite the disappointment he was ready to keep fighting and keep training as giving up was not an option.

"Master Yi, I would like to ask a favour... The Du family, one of the Big Three, in Green Moon City are plotting against my Ye family. They are trying to take our ancestral land where our family grave is located. If you don't mind I would like you to help us in resolving the dispute between us!" Even if Ye Wei didn't make it as Master Yi's apprentice, he swallowed his pride for the sake of his family and requested Master Yi's aid.

"It's not that I don't want to help, but I have had a good life staying out of others' business, and I think my life being good is the result of not interfering these types of matters..." Master Yi frowned and answered hesitantly.

Ye Wei got the hint, he was not related to Master Yi in anyway and it would be awkward for him to get involved as in the end the Du family was a force to be reckoned with in Green Moon City. Master Yi would lose more than he would gain from helping Ye Wei.

Asking Master Yi for help as an apprentice is completely different than asking as a failed applicant who scored zero on the rune consonance test. Sometimes reality can be very far from one's expectations!

If he stays here any longer and begs for Master Yi's help it will just come across as being annoying!

Ye Wei couldn't stand the silence, "Anyways, thank you Master Yi and Zi Yan for your time and this chance, sorry for disappointing you two. I will remember this favour and be forever grateful for it! Master Yi, Zi Yan, you will have to excuse me I need to go back home and deal with matters!"

Ye Wei bowed to Master Yi and Lin Zi Yan, then he dashed out of the bamboo cottage and without looking back ran towards the Ye family mansion.

"Cousin Qiu, cousin Xian, and cousin Zhong please be okay!" Ye Wei didn't waste his time worrying about himself or being sad. It was way more important to see if he could help his family!

Mount Yu Ying was not in anyway a big mountain and Ye Wei was now a three star Student, his strength, speed, and stamina were much greater than before. He was agile and fast like a monkey, jumping from one tree to the other descending down the mountain.

"So that's why all the people were gathering at the Ye family's arena? It was a bit strange that General Zhou and his men were there... Dong Ho the Ling He Merchant Guild's president was also there too now that I

think about it!"

"The Ye family must be in real trouble. It's a second class family against one of the Big Three!"

"Ye Wei you silly boy, why didn't you just tell me your family was in trouble?" Lin Zi Yan finally realized how dire the situation was and she sighed heavily. Ye Wei was the exact type who would hide things just because he didn't want to bother others, but he didn't know how influential Lin Zi Yan's family was and how effortless they could resolve the problem at hand!

"Master Yi, I have to go!" Zi Yan decided to get involved as she waved Master Yi goodbye and headed out to her runicle.

Master Yi watched as Ye Wei left the building. The determination and the stubbornness he saw in Ye Wei's eyes really touched him. 'A weird thirteen year old with a mind that strong... Maybe I can do something with him!'

"Oh screw it! I will break my rules this one time!" Master Yi sighed, he enjoyed being a hermit but he could sense Ye Wei was something special. "Cutie! I'll come with you! Your family isn't with you today, if things get nasty I will have your back!"

Now Master Yi is on Ye Wei's side, Lin Zi Yan was relieved and over the moon, as she was having a little bit of a headache thinking about how to deal with the situation on her own.

“Okay, let’s not waste any time!” Zi Yan nodded.

As they stepped foot into the runicle they noticed a flash of bright light in the cottage.

“What was that?” They thought confused.

Chapter 30 – Blossom

“Swish!”

A loud noise caught the attention of Master Yi and Zi Yan. They turned around and tried to find the source of the disturbance. Lin Zi Yan felt a warm burst of energy coming from the cottage so she went back inside the house closely followed by Master Yi.

As they entered the cottage they discovered the sequence of pale golden runes that Ye Wei drew were still floating in the air after all this time. The two were not sure when it started to oscillate, the runes were also slithering in the air like a snake as if they had a mind of their own. The runes started to expand in every direction while transforming and radiating colors of the rainbow.

The Qi flowed at an extremely high speed through the sequence and it was accelerating. Eventually the friction was so great that the runes started emitting a sizzling sound and sparks were visible as it cut through air.

Master Yi and Zi Yan were gobsmacked. Their feet grew roots by the doorway and their eyes were wide open set on the eighty-one runes that they did not know still existed.

At this point the Qi Master Yi lent to Ye Wei had already dispersed. The runes Ye Wei drew were not forming a stance hence the absence of golden lotuses, but despite this they did not disappear. The sequence was absorbing primal energy from the air and the earth to sustain itself,

ridding and replacing Master Yi's Qi within it!

The runes kept absorbing energy from their surrounding and grew in size all while transforming themselves. The sequence was twisting and reassembling. For both Master Yi and Lin Zi Yan, It was the first time to witness a rune sequence operating and evolving itself, their jaws were on the floor.

After an hour of stabilizing, the sequence of runes shrank into a bright formless cluster of energy. The noise of Qi flowing resembled the roar of a waterfall crashing down. The shining runes finally started to take shape as the noise echoed in the room. It was flowering season for golden lotuses...

"Are they finally going to bloom or what!?" Master Yi was trying to figure out why the rune sequence did not work and the blooming was delayed so long. After staring at the cluster and feeling its energy he began to understand what was going on "My Qi was not adequate to Ye Wei's unique and powerful will-force, there was no way his Flaming Golden Lotus stance could run off the energy I lent him!"

That was the only way to explain this bizarre phenomenon, it was a rare occurrence that Master Yi had never before encountered. Ye Wei's astoundingly powerful will-force was very picky and it bluntly rejected Master Yi's Qi opting to acquiring raw and stronger primal energy on its own.

Assuming that was the case, the two were now excited to see how many lotuses were going to bloom. Moments after, a few spikes started to break out from the cluster and take the shape of flaming lotuses as expected!

One, two, three, four, five!?

“Am I hallucinating? Five!” Master Yi was regretful! He could not believe he just casually dismissed a potential successor! Ye Wei had what it takes to surpass Master Yi, himself, if he was given appropriate training...

“Five lotuses! This is amazing!” Lin Zi Yan was emotional; she was happy for Ye Wei and pleased by the surprise her satisfying smile spoke a thousand words.

Just as they thought that it was over because the sequence calmed down, it started spinning around again more sparks were ignited by a violent burst of energy. A bigger and brighter golden lotus bloomed from one of the larger sparks and set itself aflame, blinding both Master Yi and Lin Zi Yan.

“The sixth!” Master Yi’s voice broke as he shouted, he had an adrenaline spike as he witness this extraordinary moment!

“He has the legendary level of rune consonance! If the news is spread, Ye Wei will put Green Moon City in the spotlight of the whole empire! There are less than five people with this kind of gift in the whole dynasty!” He exclaimed and explained to Lin Zi Yan what kind of genius Ye Wei actually was.

“He has Legendary level rune consonance?!” Lin Zi Yan was rubbing her eyes in awe, just to make sure what she was seeing was real.

Just as they finished speaking, the cluster was dimming and shrank to the size of a large watermelon.

“Pop!”

The cluster was dying down and the final burst of energy set the runes on fire. It looked like it was starting to engulf itself. But instead of disappearing, an even larger and brighter lotus emerged from the small fireball!

“Seven golden lotuses!? His rune consonance is at the Supreme level!?” Master Yi was completely horrified. He nearly forgot to breathe, his eyes looked like they were about to fall out of their sockets. From what he read, ever gifted person with Legendary level consonance ended up being God’s prime Warriors or even Supremes! It was the first time in centuries someone with Supreme level rune consonance had surfaced.

“If he didn’t sleep and didn’t shout in my lecture I would never have noticed him!” Lin Zi Yan too was shocked. She found someone that might end up in the history books from the most unexpected place.

“What we just saw stays in this room!” Master Yi looked at Lin Zi Yan with a hysterical gaze. “If anyone learns what Ye Wei possesses, he will be approached and bothered by different powers. This kind of potential will also make him a target for assassination by family enemies and maybe even demon tribes! The world’s attention was not what he needs now, but privacy and space to train. Master Yi was desperate to protect Ye Wei by covering up this information.

A thirteen year old genius should never be burdened because of his talents, although in Master Yi's eyes, Ye Wei was not a genius but a demon child. He was very aware of the dark side of Ye Wei's potential. It meant that if he falls into the wrong hands, he could grow into an uncontrollable nefarious force.

Lin Zi Yan on the other hand was more jolly and positive: "Ye Wei is destined to become what he wants to be! I think the Ye family will reach new heights with him as the Patriarch!" She was smiling with an open mouth, her deep purple eyes were filled with hope and happiness. But then she realised something!

"Damn it! We have wasted too much time here. I think Ye Wei might already have gotten home... The Du family and their partners in crime are ganging up on the Ye family!"

"If Ye Wei ends up hurt because of them. I will make sure Green Moon Castle becomes empty for a while... As well as the the Du family's and Ling He Merchant Guild's grounds." Lin Zi Yan's eyes turned violet even Master Yi had never seen her this mad.

"Master Yi, we have to hurry! I don't want to live in regret for the rest of my life..."

Every single talent counts when it comes to combating the demons. Protecting Ye Wei is protecting humanity in Master Yi's point of view. "From this moment on, Ye Wei is my apprentice if anyone harms a hair on his head then they will taste my wrath, whomever it maybe." He declared in a ruthless voice. He knew very well that it would be impossible to find an apprentice of the same calibre again even if he went searching to the edge of the world.

Master Yi added a couple more runes to the runicle to boost its speed before they took off. It was now a race against time!

The seven golden lotuses were still floating in the air. The golden glint slowly fading, revealing the true colors of the lotuses underneath. Each lotus had a different luminous glow. This was a phenomenon that even a Master would not be able to explain if he had witnessed it. Ye Wei's rainbow coloured Flaming Golden Lotus stance finally faded without a trace...

The fight started soon after Ye Wei took off with Lin Zi Yan, and it was now in full swing!

“You piece of garbage why do you even try!?”

Ye Xuan was on the ground, heavily injured. Du Xian Hong's foot was on his chest. It was no surprise the four star Warrior would dominate and toy with the three star Warrior, but Du Xian Hong was taking it even further. With brute force he stepped on Ye Xuan's rib cage and broke three ribs. A twisted sadistic smile was on the bully's face as he spat on Ye Xuan's face. In shame and agony Ye Xuan coughed up a stream of blood...

Early on Ye Xuan was overpowered by Du Xian Hong's high level Spirit stance. He was forced to the ground after a few attempts to parry and dodge the ferocious attacks, before he could even fight back. All he achieved was making Du Xian Hong use a small amount of Qi.

“Is this really all you’ve got?!” Du Xian Hong exclaimed as his opponent fainted. He then lifted his foot in the air. “Hey, wake up!” Down went his foot again, this time it landed on Ye Xuan’s arm.

His hysterical laughter accompanied by the sound of bones cracking echoed in the arena.

Chapter 31 – Best Served Warm

“Crack! Crack! Crack!” Du Xian Hong’s stare was cold but his smile was warm. He was enthusiastic and not easily satisfied when it came to torturing others. His footwork was as fast as lightning; the way he broke Ye Xuan’s right arm and both legs happened in a flash as the three stomps took only a second!

Ye Xuan’s groan echoed in the arena sending shivers down the Ye’s spines, his family’s aching hearts ignited their anger and there was nothing they wanted more than revenge for the disrespect and torture.

‘These guys... They really don’t care about their relation with the Ye family after this duel! Maybe the Du family plans to wipe them out here and now?’

The audience was shocked into silence and chilled by the violence. They came here for a fight and entertainment, but this... this was way more than what they had expected.

“Stop!!”

Ye Zhong shouted as his veins bulged on his head. His bloodshot eyes made it apparent that he wanted Du Yin Hong in pieces; that he wanted to inflict unnecessary pain in the process giving him a taste of his own medicine. There was a good chance his cousin would get paralysed from this.

“Yin Hong, you can stop it now. We are friendly people after all. Even if

they are rubbish they deserve a place somewhere in society. Also remember we are the guests. We should respect other families!” Rubbing salt in his opponent’s wounds was one of Du Yuan Ming’s specialties. He kept a straight face while smiling as he spoke.

Everyone watching understood the mockery but they could not understand the reason for their aggression.

“The Du family is surely the nicest family out of the Big Three. Them beating the Ye’s would actually be a favour to them as they don’t have any worthy young blood! I mean, if you want to call yourself a family you should at least have... I don’t know, at least a five star Warrior who is less than twenty-five years old, right? Don’t give them silly thoughts and false hopes. The young ones should be more realistic and learn their place. Hahaha!” General Zhou fancied the bit of abuse too.

“Can’t you guys be constructive?” President Dong Ho said, “The only thing Du family ever wanted was a little plot of land. If I were you I would just sell the land and earn some money. There is no point in being dramatic about it!” His belly wobbled as he laughed. “There is a fine line between dignity and stupidity and everyone can see which of these two you guys are closer to.”

Ye Zheng Qing did not take this topic light-heartedly. His fists were clenched, he was tired of the harassment and felt extremely frustrated. It was partially true the Ye family was not doing well, but the bullying was completely out of line. He wanted Ye Zhong to give it his best shot hoping the surprise tactic he mentioned during training would work out.

“Ye Patriarch, I have to apologise for the young one he’s still very new to the scene therefore very bad at controlling himself. I will scold him

when this is all over, please don't take it too personal!" Said Du Yuan Ming, his fake smile was not much more convincing than his horrible speech.

"No, Ye Xuan should have protected himself better." Ye Zheng Qing tried to sound cool and indifferent, refusing to give Du Yuan Ming any satisfaction.

As soon as the exchange of words died down Ye Hai leaped into the arena and carefully lifted Ye Xuan up.

Healthy would be the last word to describe Ye Xuan's critical condition. His breathing was light, weak, and fading! Even a tough man like Ye Hai could not remain calm in this situation, his eyes were red and wet. He wiped off his tears right after pushing a pill down Ye Xuan's throat.

"Zhong, please take care of yourself. Your cousin is not well, three broken ribs, fractured arms and legs... You know what to do!" Ye Zheng Qing's warm palm rubbed Ye Zhong's shoulder.

"I know exactly what you mean."

He knew grandpa was angry and so was he, but surprise was his only chance so he kept a cool look and a small smile on his face. But deep in his mind, he was imagining himself destroying Du Xian Hong, the word mercy has been forgotten.

"Ye Xuan, you have done your best. I will make him pay! Get even for you, and more." He was thinking out loud, but the mumble was not really

audible for anyone but himself. He was mentally ready and after taking a deep breath he headed into the arena with clenched fists.

His robe flowed gracefully as he leaped onto the stage, as much as he wanted to cover up his aggression his veins bulged and his beastlike posture gave everything away. It was obvious to anyone who knew him that this was not the normal, calm and collected Ye Zhong.

“Are there any talents in the Ye family? By the looks of things I can take out the trash on my own!” Du Xian Hong was c*cky from his domination over Ye Xuan. He was completely relaxed when he aimed his arrogant glare at Ye Zhong and spoke with disdain.

He was not aware that Ye Zhong was no longer a four star Warrior. In his mind, even though Ye Zhong had the same cultivation as himself he already had an answer to the threat. “Cultivation is not everything. I can beat you easily... because I have what we call talent!” He based his confidence on mastering a peak high level Spirit stance which was a secret to everyone outside the family.

“It’s funny how much stronger our family’s youngsters are. To me it is a sad thing that a four star Warrior is all your family’s young generation has to offer! Let’s see how many seconds you can last, hopefully you won’t go down quicker than that piece of rubbish did.” Du Xian Hong laughed and beckoned arrogantly.

Ye Zhong did not waste a single second, he wiggled his fingers at lightning speed. Just as Du Xian Hong finished talking there were already seventy-two runes flying around Ye Zhong. They glowed and transformed into a wave under his feet.

High level Spirit stance, Spindrift Steps!

Ye Zhong placed his feet onto the crest of a wave, his body disappearing leaving behind a splashing sound. A blurry flash was now approaching Du Xian Hong and the raging Ye Zhong was not slowing down in the slightest.

“Whoosh!”

In the blink of an eye he was in front of Du Xian Hong’s face, and his fist was covered in a silver texture, held behind his head like an arrow on a drawn bow aimed at his target.

Ye Zhong’s plan to hide his five star cultivation failed completely. Only Warriors who are five stars or higher have the ability to materialise their Qi on any part of their bodies, if his lightning speed wasn’t obvious enough, this materialization would be.

Ye Zhong’s posture resembled a pouncing cheetah, the tensed up muscles all over his body were shaking like they were about to explode. His fist that was breaking through the air, created a loud whistling sound.

‘This is not what a four star Warrior can do,’ Du Yuan Hong’s eyes were wide open, Ye Zhong’s fist was covering more and more of his vision as it approached. He subconsciously raised his guard.

That split second decision might have saved Du Yuan Hong’s life as the

fist was deflected, but with had the momentum of a sledgehammer it passed through his guard and landed right between his collarbones.

“Crack!”

Both bones in each of his arms and six of his ribs cracked like twigs as Ye Zhong’s fist powered through leaving a dent in his chest.

The difference between a four star and a five star Warrior was too vast, it was bound to be a one sided slaughter regardless of Ye Zhong’s rage. His ruthlessness and aggression just made it look even more one sided.

“Now you are going to pay. With interest!” Ye Zhong said as he walked slowly towards Du Xian Hong who has been knocked ten yards away by the impact. His face was deathly pale and full of fear as if he was looking at the the grim reaper.

Du Xian Hong’s confidence was replaced by an immense sense of fear, “Please don’t! I surrender! Just let m...”

“Boom!”

Ye Zhong’s silver fist landed on Xian Hong’s face, torso, upper arms, and thighs. They each carried the weight of a mountain and landed in such a rapid succession that it sounded as if only one punch connected.

He did not hold back. Though most of the audience couldn’t see how it happened, they knew from the silver texture on Ye Zhong’s fist that he was at least a five star Warrior. Though they were not as shocked than

the Du family was. A couple of spies were about to be punished and maybe fired.

“So there will be a fight after all! And this Ye Zhong kid has some future ahead of him!”

The crowd was speculating and the people from other big families who came to scout were getting worried. If the Ye family lives through today they might become a threat with young Ye Zhong’s potential to become a condensed prime Warrior in a few years.

Ye Zhong was furious, but he didn’t lose his cool and could still control his bloodlust. Du Xian Hong only had a few unbroken bones in his body which was now bleeding internally. There was a good chance of paralysis but it was fair in a way. If Ye Zhong would have stopped any later he would have taken his opponent’s life. Giving the Du family an excuse for revenge was not the best idea as they brought support with them to the arena.

“Zhong, you can stop now. We are friendly people. Let’s show some respect to our guests! Making the Big Three lose face in front of that many people was not very considerate.” Ye Zheng Qing copied the Du Patriarch’s words and tone. Sometimes revenge is best served warm.

The Ye family were gentle people but they had never been afraid of confrontations, no matter what the obstacles may be.

Chapter 32 – Trump Card

“Old Du, the young ones are hot-headed aren’t they! I am sorry your grandson was injured, hopefully he will recover quickly. I will have a serious talk with Ye Zhong when this is over, as you mentioned just now it’s not very nice to stomp your opponents like that especially when they’re rubbish, it’s hardly constructive is it?” Ye Zheng Qing waved slightly and bowed making an apologetic gesture.

‘An eye for an eye!’

Du Yuan Ming was ashen-faced as he viciously stared at Ye Zheng Qing.

‘Ye Zhong you sneaky child! You’ve been hiding your breakthrough all this time when we were training? How did you, how could you?’ Ye Patriarch was as glad as he was puzzled. Then he realised everything was linked. That the night he heard the tiger’s roars were related to Ye Wei’s soul sensibility and that Ye Zhong actually broke through thanks to his little cousin’s soul sensibility.

‘My family can become great again! I have to somehow lead us out of this mess so the young ones can blossom. Even the weakest of them is showing great potential, I can’t let their efforts go to waste.’ He saw the silver lining during their darkest hours. If little Wei can achieve something seemingly impossible so could he.

“Little Zhong is full of surprises!” Ye Yi wore a satisfying smile as he turned to the others and said.

“Yi, brother, thank you.” Ye Hai answered as a few drops of tears ran down his face.

Ye Yi as well realised his son contributed vastly to Ye Zhong’s breakthrough, he felt like a better father and was extremely proud of his son. He had seldom gotten appreciation from his siblings.

“Cousin Zhong is my new idol! He just became a four star Warrior not long ago! How does he do it?” The young ones too gained respect for him, and they were looking at their big cousin standing in the middle of the arena imitating his moves.

“Get out of the way now!” Ye Zhong muttered and kicked the unconscious Du Xian Hong in the air, towards the Du camp’s direction.

“Well fought!”

Feeling humiliated, Du Yuan Ming’s face was black. He let out a low hum and flicked his long sleeves out to catch his grandson which was empowered with Qi to make it supportive like a cushion. He wrapped his sleeve around the limp body then placed it next to where the medics were waiting.

“Han Yue, looks like they’ve gotten themselves a five star Warrior. What do you say about playing with him a bit before killing him?” He couldn’t look at the bloody mess which happened to be his grandson for more than a second. Revenge was the only thing in his head, and his voice was slow, low, and cruel when he spoke to Du Han Yue.

He never thought he would have to send Du Han Yue out to get his hands dirty as the plan was to let Du Xian Hong and other five star Warriors finish the deed until Ye Zhong displayed his capabilities. “Han Yue, respect your opponent and give it your all. If anything happens dad has your back?” He stared at Ye Zhong and said with the intention to kill.

“Understood!”

Du Han Yue nodded. He squinted his eyes in the direction of Ye Zhong, planning how to knock him out cold. He shifted his balance to his forefeet, bent his knees then launched himself high up in the air, towards the arena.

The Ye family all had worrying faces as Du Han Yue’s shadow entered the ring, the ones that had seen him fight were more anxious than the others who had not. The six star Warrior’s unique ruthless fighting style etched a bloody image on the minds of whoever witnessed him in action.

Ye Zhong couldn’t win with power and speed, the cultivation difference was to much; nor did the Ye family have an advantage when it came to stance variety because the Du family had a big library of them. The odds were stacked up against Ye Zhong...

“Little Zhong...” Ye Hai has seen Du Han Yue fight, there was no reason for him not to be worried. At this point it was fair to say the Ye family and the Du family had fallen out completely. It would not be a surprise if the Du family wanted Ye Zhong badly injured, or dead to gain some face after Ye Zhong humiliated them.

“Cousin Zhong, Please protect yourself!”

It's not they didn't have faith in Ye Zhong, the old and the young Ye's were worried because they were aware of Du Han Yue's status as one of the top five youngsters in Green Moon City. They knew that he had real talent to back up the name he made for himself.

The air froze in and around the arena. Ye Zhong was in a long light green robe and Du Han Yue in white. Standing ten meters away from each other exchanging looks, both imagining ways to overpower his opponent.

All eyes were on these two. This was the matchup everyone was here to watch. Talents speak for themselves and there were two of them standing off right here, right now; early on the crowd learned what the stake was during the patriarchs' verbal exchange. It wasn't just any fight. The clash of these two geniuses will affect future affairs in Green Moon City and the result of this fight would be as interesting as the fight itself for those who were not present.

“Ye Zhong being a five star Warrior has little effect on the outcome of this fight. Even if he breaks through to six star here and now in front of us, he still won't be able to beat Han Yue, and that's a big and impossible if!” The talkative General Zhou couldn't bare the silence. He smiled as he turned his head towards the two who sat next to him.

“I don't think anyone who has less than a seven star cultivation will be able to challenge Du Han Yue... Good luck finding someone like that in Green Moon City! Or in the Ye family in this case! Hahaha!” President

Dong agreeably nodded.

Du Han Tue came to fame because of a fight six months ago where he beat not one, not two, but three six star Warriors... People have since kept an eye on his development.

“What’s your name again? Ye Zhong right?” Du Yue Ming was getting into the mood to fight. He was feeling pretty confident after hearing praises from the audience’s chatter and the sardonic smile on his pale face reflected just that.

“You guessed it!” Ye Zhong was on the alert. A fight with someone stronger than himself can be over in a matter of seconds. Although he is now a five star Warrior and has mastered a low level Myst stance, he could not reveal the stance before the right moment; the stance has to connect and finish the fight, using it defensively would not help him win the fight against this six star Warrior who stood before him.

“So, I was watching your fight. I counted seventy-eight punches and sixteen kicks. I am here to collect the debt!”

“I will punch you seventy-eight times and kick you sixteen times. I will keep count and won’t stop before we’re even, if it means punching and kicking your corpse, so be it!” Du Han Yue laughed and made the first move. He moved his right foot forward, his white robe and shoulder length hair were flowing in the wind giving off the bloodthirsty aura of a wild beast as he got into a half crouch position.

“You sure talk a lot!” Ye Zhong too moved his right foot forward, dust spread out in a rippling motion when he stomped the ground to show off

his strength.

“I will see how long you can stay on your feet!” Du Han Yue said with an impassive expression. He quickly channeled his will-force and Qi, his finger were moving fast, drawing eighty-three runes in no time.

The screen of runes veiled Du Han Yue therefore Ye Zhong lost clear sight of him. There were some movements behind the veil but it was blurry.

“Swoosh! Swoosh Swoosh!”

The veil was transparent on Du Han Yue’s side and he could evaluate where Ye Zhong’s weak spots were, then he injected more Qi into the rune sequence, transforming it into a blood red ancient looking blade.

‘Peak high level Spirit stance, Phantom Ichor Blade!’

Known for its brutal force; this stance was one of the Du family’s most famous weapons.

Du Yue Ming then pointed his finger at one of the weak spots, the phantom blade vibrated and flew towards Ye Zhong’s heart, leaving a crimson trail in the air.

The phantom blade was sharper and more powerful than any mortal blade and it left a tiny ravine wherever it flew.

Ye Zhong knew there was no way to parry this attack and that he was dead if he took it head on. Thus he immediately drew a string of runes and stepped on the wave's crest and disappeared in a flash. The blade missed him by about three meters.

He knew Spindrift Steps would now be very useful thanks to Ye Wei. If Ye Wei didn't refine this stance with him, the fight would have been over already.

Chapter 33 – Forbidden Swords

What a dodge, little Zhong's speed is incredible! It's great he broke through to five star level, the speed just saved his life!" Ye Zheng Qing was amazed and soon realised that Ye Zhong's Spindrift Steps was a bit different to the advanced high level Spirit stance he learned as a teenager. He was positive because he had been teaching this stance for decades since he first started training youngsters in the Ye family.

‘Could this be!?’ He stated, as it became more obvious.

‘His Spindrift Step became a peak high level Spirit stance! Did little Wei do this?’ Remembering what Ye Zhong said earlier about Ye Wei’s soul sensibility and putting two and two together was easy, but believing it was another thing altogether. The Ye Patriarch appeared calm, but he was more excited than anyone in the entire arena. ‘Will the Ye family really have a Runemaster? God bless us!’

“How many secrets are those two keeping from us?” Ye Hai looked at Ye Yi, both were pleasantly surprised and shook their heads in frustration. The brothers, themselves, hid things from the patriarch when they were Zhong and Wei’s age, but they didn’t know until now how it felt being on the other end of such secrecy. The brothers felt that they do not at all understand their growing children anymore.

“Only three out of sixteen of our family’s high level Spirit stances are at the peak stage. Now with Spindrift Steps we have four!”

“Its practicality and value just doubled. We need to ask Ye Zhong to tell

us what rune they changed!” Ye Zhong’s aunt and uncles were amazed by his swift maneuver in the arena, and they temporarily forgot about the dire situation they were in.

The Ye family was awed and shocked whereas the Du family was aggravated and stunned. The Du family carried out a thorough investigation of the Ye family. The Du Patriarch was not happy that these two important details were not described in the report regarding Ye Zhong’s cultivation and stances.

“What is this report? Does Ye Zhong look like a four star Warrior and does his Spindrift Step looks like an advanced high level Spirit stance to anyone here? We all make mistakes, but two inaccurate pieces of information on the same person? I cannot accept this!”

“Who was investigating the Ye family?” Du Yuan Ming questioned as he was extremely dissatisfied. The family members were distressed by the patriarch’s gloomy face as he scanned around him looking for whoever was responsible.

“Big brother... I was responsible for the reports!” The patriarch’s third eldest brother Du Yuan Yan stepped forward. He was as frustrated as anyone else in the Du family if not more. He had verified every little detail himself and could not understand the inconsistency in the report.

“I expect precise explanations for this mistake!” Du Yuan Ming frowned at his brother.

“Patriarch, surely it doesn’t matter that his Spindrift Step is at the advanced level or peak level? Jumping around very quickly is not going to

win him the fight against Han Yue.” Dong Ho laughed as he spoke.

“It’s just a peak level Spirit stance, even if this kid brought out a forbidden stance it wouldn’t affect anything. The difference in their cultivation is too vast; these tricks won’t get him anywhere!” General Zhou sneered.

The two were very confident about Du Han Yue’s cultivation over Ye Zhong’s. He was one of the best six star Warriors there were. Du Han Yue knew he was destined to win.

“Looks like Han Yue is bit angry though?” There was a smile on Dong He’s chubby face, and he could tell the fight was going to get interesting. He squinted his eyes and looked into the arena. The six star Warrior did a look a bit frustrated by his speedy opponent.

There was a cold glimmer in Du Han Yue’s eyes, and he said in a low voice: “Dodge? Can you dodge this with just your fancy peak high level Spirit stance?”

His face suddenly looked very serious then he transferred will-force to his fingers. He focused on getting a good aim at Ye Zhong who was quick due to the wave on his feet.

He wiggled his fingers and the phantom blade started transforming, it vibrated vigorously then split into four. Which were now homing in on Ye Zhong from all directions.

There was a blade above, below, left, and right of Ye Zhong, dodging

was no longer an option.

“In this case...” Ye Zhong evaluated his situation. His eyes brightened up, Qi and will-force came pouring out as he came up with an idea. He was so familiar with this stance, the eight-one runes were almost engraved into Ye Zhong’s mind from his training. Therefore it took him less than a second to finish drawing the sequence.

The runes lit up around his body, emitting a crystal clear glow as they intertwined into three ancient double edged spirit swords. Each of the swords were engraved on their fullers with mysterious runes, giving off an desolate aura.

“High level forbidden Spirit stance, Triple Plunder Sword!”

Ye Wei and Ye Zhong refined three stances in total: Spindrift Step, Triple Plunder Sword, and White Tiger’s Assault. They all became more powerful, but the refinement was a bit different with Triple Plunder Sword. Not only did Ye Wei made it more powerful, but he also reduced the recoil so it would not hurt the user as much as other forbidden stances would.

Performing it once or twice was fine, but the stance might still harm whoever used it too often.

Now that Du Han Yue sealed all the escape routes, retaliation was Ye Zhong’s only way out!

Ye Zhong trod on the dusty ground while pointing his fingers at the

four phantom blades. What followed was a razor sharp pressure wave, and his spirit swords flew out in a flash towards the blood red phantom blades.

The three spirit swords were on a course to collide with the four phantom blades. They too carved marks into the ground on their path as if their shadows had a cutting edge.

“Clang!”

Forbidden technique was more than just a title; the spirit swords were very powerful. The four phantom blades were repulsed by two spirit swords as the last sword flew straight at Du Han Yue.

“Forbidden stance!”

It became apparent to Du Yue Ming and the spectators that Triple Plunder Sword was a forbidden stance when they saw that just one sword was powerful enough to block two peak high level phantom blades. Both the Ye and Du family could not hide how surprised they were as both had the same facial expression.

A Ye who practised forbidden stances! It was shocking news to both families not only because of the strength of these techniques, but also due to the dangers it brings. Furthermore, Ye Zhong was the strongest youngster with a bright future ahead of him. It made little sense that he should use a forbidden stance given their reputation of having a life threatening recoil.

Even though Du Han Yue was a six star Warrior, his cultivation advantage didn't play a big part in this Mystic stance showdown. His crimson phantom blades could not compete with the forbidden swords, therefore they were destroyed and turned into red smoke upon impact.

However the Qi and will-force of a six star Warrior was on another level. Although Du Han Yue's stance was a level lower, Ye Zhong's two spirit blades were shattered by the phantom blades that were made from denser Qi.

The clash of Qi swords and blades turned into a screen of dust and smoke. From the smokescreen came Ye Zhong's last spirit sword. It flew towards Du Han Yue with frightening, penetrating momentum.

It tore through the air travelling at a furious speed while creating an explosive, and piercing whistling sound. It didn't matter if Du Han Yue had a cultivation advantage, the speed of the forbidden sword made it undodgeable.

“Get him!” Ye Zhong said with wide open eyes and the intention to kill..

Chapter 34 – Butterfly Effect

Ever since the duel was arranged the odds were stacked heavily against Ye Zhong in this five star versus six star Warrior death-match. Even his own family did not have high expectations of him leaving the arena as the victor; they just wanted him to come out alive. But after seeing Ye Zhong performing a forbidden stance, as the spirit sword closes in on Du Han Yue, they felt victory was near.

If Ye Zhong beat Du Han Yue here not only will the the Du family give up on their ancestral land at North Hill Bay they would also stop sabotaging the Ye family's businesses.

Exceeding the Ye family's wildest imagination, Triple Plunder Sword had now become a forbidden stance and it might just help them bury their problems!

The audiences' eyes were popping out and they could not look away. They were at the edge of their seats as they witnessing a possible upset. The details of the last fight where a lower ranked cultivator beat a higher ranked opponent was so monumental that it would be recorded in the history books of Green Moon City! This rare achievement will put Ye Zhong's name in the hall of fame.

“Forbidden stance! Damn it! Since when do the Ye's have one of those in their arsenal!?” The whole Du camp was worried except three people who were keeping their cool and looked undaunted.

The Du Patriarch, President Dong, and General Zhou were impressed

but they knew Du Han Yue would not go down that easily; the six star Warrior had many ways to deal with this situation!

For Ye Zhong using a forbidden stances was a way to challenge and maybe even topple a six star Warrior, but Du Han Yue was anything but ordinary. Without amazing defense, this genius couldn't have beaten three six star Warriors single-handedly.

Being a pretty talented fighter himself, even when he was a level below six star, Ye Zhong should be able to defeat many six star Warriors, but he was about to find out just how versatile *this* opponent was.

“High level Spirit stance, Ivy Armor!”

“High level Spirit stance, Iron Frame!”

The spirit sword was a sizeable threat that concerned Du Han Yue. It was the first time in a long while he looked worried. But he wasn't startled as he knew exactly how to respond. His will-force came pouring out and with Qi he drew rune after rune which became the two high level Spirit stances.

The large amount of twinkling runes were floating around the duelists. Behind the screen of shining shapes, ivy armor started materializing on Du Han Yue's body. Underneath the armor his skin gained a metallic luster and all of a sudden his flesh and skin became hard as steel.

Du Han Yue's lightning reflexes allowed him to react moments before the spirit sword connected, and he finished the two stances in less than a

second! The spirit sword did not wait as it tore through the newly formed armor.

“Pop!”

Ye Zhong’s spirit sword pierced right through, but the armor did slow its momentum. When the sword reached Du Han Yue’s skin it was weakened by roughly thirty percent.

“Clang!”

The spirit sword threw sparks as it grazed the glowing skin on Du Han Yue’s cheek. The sharp grinding echoed in the arena.

The sword was deflected as if it crashed into a solid block of steel!

The spirit sword shattered after leaving a shallow red trail. “A forbidden stance... Good. Welldone!” Fresh blood ran down Du Han Yue’s face as he slowly raised his hand and wiped it off. He spoke in an intriguingly calm tone. His stare remained sharp and it was apparent that he was not emotionally affected by Ye Zhong’s ferocious onslaught.

The wicked spirit sword had the intent to kill, but it did next to nothing to Du Han Yue!

“I am proud of you. Seem the Ye family has more than just history after all! But you’re not special! We know forbidden stances too!” Du Han Yue said with a straight face, looking right into Ye Zhong’s eyes. It sounded like he didn’t really care about his opponent’s impressive forbidden

technique. He leisurely raised his fingers, will-force was still lingering on them as he skillfully moved his Qi from his dantian to his hands.

With his fingers Du Han Yue transformed his Qi into runes. He drew every rune with great intensity and there was burst of energy for every rune he finished. The energy waves were warm and pressuring.

“Forbidden stance, Butterfly Inferno!” There was an abnormal red flush to his face as he finished the twinkling sequence. The hundred and thirty-six runes were formed within the blink of an eye.

“Buzz!”

Qi flowed vigorously within the sequence of runes then it metamorphosed into a swarm of clear winged butterflies which burned brightly.

Flapping wings from the swarm of butterflies stirred up a blistering tornado. Hundreds of raging butterflies rushed towards Ye Zhong.

Each burning butterfly had the wingspan of only three inches, but their presence exceeded their size! The faces of the Ye family turned pale when they saw the enormous swarm of burning butterflies fill the arena.

“Butterfly Inferno stance! The Du family lets their kids practice forbidden techniques?!” Ye Zheng Qing’s face went pale. Ye Zhong’s performance was way better than the patriarch’s expectations and that gave him a glimmer of hope which had just been shattered by Du Han Yue using a forbidden technique.

Being one of the Big Three, it was natural that Du family had access to forbidden stances, but they were actually against younger family members, especially geniuses like Du Han Yue, using such techniques because of the repercussions they could cause and their harmful side-effects.

Using these dangerous stances can shake one's foundation therefore it is usually not worth the risk. When Du Han Yue and Ye Zhong showed off their double-edged techniques their families were far from pleased!

“Butterfly Inferno... Is that really necessary? Han Yue seems to be a bit too impulsive. It's just Ye Zhong, there is no need to use a forbidden technique surely? He's just a five star Warrior! Yes, he knows a forbidden stance, but Han Yue still has the will-force and Qi advantage!”

“Just wait until Ye Zhong uses up his Qi. A fatigued opponent is an easy opponent that is an obvious and risk-free way to win right?” Seeing Du Han Yue getting carried away, General Zhou and President Dong both shook their heads in disappointment thinking he was too young and hot-headed to judge the situation.

Du Yuan Ming was not angry, but he too was disappointed. The most talented youngster basically just wasted a few months worth of training. It was very possible for Du Han Yue to reach the condensed prime Warrior level before he turned thirty. Ye Zhong was not a worthy opponent, definitely not worth wasting his son's precious' future prospects.

“Idiot! Ye Zhong is just a five star Warrior of course he is going to give

everything he has including forbidden stances! He's willing to risk everything for honor and to save his ancestral land! Why the hell would you use a forbidden technique just to match him? You could be looking at breaking through to the seven star level in six months! The recoil is going to set you back so much and now you won't be able to breakthrough for another year!" These were the words of a mysterious teenager who stood amongst the Du camp. He shook his head with disdain when he saw Ye Zhong and Du Han Yue performing forbidden stances.

A few of the Du family's talented youngsters frowned when they heard the mysterious youth's rant, but they didn't dare verbalise their disagreement.

They didn't know exactly who he was, but they knew he was related to Lu Feng, and that he was an eighteen year old seven star Warrior! It's hard to imagine but they do exist. The Du family wouldn't gain anything if they angered such a person.

"What!? Du Han Yue knows forbidden techniques too! This is the last nail in the coffin for Ye Zhong for sure his opponents cultivation advantage and stances are too much for him to handle!"

"The Ye family is done for!" Seeing the butterflies burying Ye Zhong the audience started to speculate again.

Ye Zhong impressed many by fighting valiantly, but it looked to the audience like the fairytale was coming to an end the moment they saw Du Han Yue performing a forbidden stance.

The butterflies swarmed towards Ye Zhong like a rain of burning arrows. They were closing in on Ye Zhong fast, ready to explode.

“Boom!”

Red hot waves exploded on Ye Zhong. He found himself bathing in a tornado of burning blades, his clothes and skin were ripped and burnt by the stance. His clothes became rags and his skin turned black and green from bruises and burns. It was looking grim for him.

Chapter 35 – Mystic Tiger

In no time, Ye Zhong's hair and eyebrows were burnt. His face became worryingly pale, and he spat out blood due to internal injuries. Despite being hit hard though, he did not shake, nor did Ye Zhong take his eyes off Du Han Yue. He was staring at the six star Warrior with a determined look through the hundreds of burning butterflies.

How was Ye Zhong suppose to defend himself against his rival's forbidden stance with his cultivation deficit?

“Ye Zhong, just throw in the towel! The plot of ancestral land by North Hill Bay means nothing if there is nobody to inherit it!” Seeing Ye Zhong struggling, the patriarch's heart dropped. He yelled and tried to interrupt the fight because he could feel Du Han Yue's killing intent.

Ye Zhong's display of exceptional strength and talent was more than anyone had expected. But Du Han Yue was an obstacle on a different level. With a forbidden stance in his arsenal, the elite six star Warrior from the Du family was too much for Ye Zhong's five star Warrior cultivation to handle.

The Ye family had lost. The script for this duel's finale had been written!

Although inheritance is one of the main priorities for the Ye family, it was not quite as important as the young ones' lives.

The plot of land at North Hill Bay didn't mean as much as Ye Zhong's

well-being did to the patriarch. He was only twenty-two and judging by his progress, the five star Warrior had great chance of becoming a condensed prime Warrior if he was given enough time. The patriarch was ready to trade his family's pride for his grandson's future. The eldest grandson who had the potential to become stronger than he was.

With Ye Zhong and Ye Wei as the foundation, Ye Zheng Qing was certain the Ye family could rebuild and become strong again, even if they were to lose the duel. One will always win and lose in life, sometimes it's more important to protect the future than to be obsessed with pride and honor.

“Ye Zhong, surrender now!”

“It's not worth it big cousin!”

Ye Zhong's green robe was now blood-soaked, partially burnt black, and in shreds. Looking at the burnt and bloody man, Ye Hai, Ye Yi, Ye Jing Jing, and the Ye youngsters showed immense worry in their eyes as they shouted desperately.

“Du Yuan Ming, I am speaking for my family! We surrender! Make Du Han Yue stop fighting!” Ye Zheng Qing shouted towards where the Du Patriarch sat.

“This fight is not really mine but the young ones' business. The moment they stepped into the arena we have no rights to interfere, their lives are their own responsibilities. I didn't call a stop to the fight when our Du Yuan Hong nearly lost his life, did I?” Du Yuan Ming laughed wryly. He wore a cold smile on his face while casually glancing at the

desperate Ye Patriarch.

“You!” Ye Zheng Qing was clouded by anger and didn’t know what to say. Du Xian Hong started the torture earlier and it was fair for Ye Zhong to take revenge. It frustrated him greatly because he was willing to give up the ancestral land, but the Du patriarch was still cold and refused to be reasonable! ‘What more do you want!?’ He asked in his mind.

Butterfly Inferno was a forbidden stance, and now that it was performed by a six star Warrior its destructiveness was in a completely different realm! If it was not stopped Ye Zhong will have zero chance of surviving; he will be engulfed and incinerated!

“This is our premises!” Ye Zheng Qing looked towards Ye Zhong who was now in grave danger. He could not wait any longer. The Ye Patriarch took a step forward, and his force had the presence of the great mountains, he stirred up breezes and the air around him started rippling.

At the Ye camp, the one star condensed prime Warrior Ye Hai, the three seven star Warriors Ye Han, Ye Yi, and Ye Yu, and the seven star Warrior Ye Jing Jing were all releasing their Qi readying for a brawl to save Ye Zhong.

How could they just sit back and watch?

“What? Do you lot want to break the rules? Don’t any of you dare come a step closer to the arena!” Du Yuan Ming said as he was staring off with the Ye family. Walking forward he channeled his energy emitting an invisible wave from the tip of his foot.

“Ye Patriarch, I, Zhou Wu, am the judge of this duel. What do you think you’re doing? And who do you think I am? The City Lord will hear about this!”

Seven Star condensed prime Warrior General Zhou Wu too took a heavy step forward. He stood side by side with Du Patriarch and gave a cold glare to the Ye camp.

“Ye Zheng Qing don’t make stupid mistakes!” The sneering Ling He Merchant Guild’s president Dong Ho stood up by his allies as well.

Du Yuan Ming and general Zhou were both seven star condensed prime Warrior whereas Dong Ho was a five star condensed prime Warrior. The energy from these three together was enough to drown out the Ye camp’s despite their greatest efforts.

The Ye family only had two condensed prime Warriors, and they were three star and one star level. There was no chance for them to contend against the Du camp.

The challengers did not plan to go easy on the Ye family from the start. If the Ye Patriarch and his kin decide to interfere with what was happening in the arena then it would be the perfect excuse for the Du’s to wipe them out!

“Du Yuan Ming, if anything happens to Ye Zhong I will fight you to my last breath!” Ye Zheng Qing’s silver hair framed his straight, furious face. The energy he was releasing made his hair stand up, the patriarch resemble an angry lion.

“To your last breath?” Du Yuan Ming sneered with disdain. “We are one of the Big Three. There are six condensed prime Warriors compared to your family’s two! What does your decaying family have to challenge us with? That is some overconfidence!”

“Looks like the Du family wants to go in for the kill. What a shame for the Ye family... This Ye Zhong stood his ground pretty well. His mastery over that forbidden technique and him being a five star Warrior will be wasted. It’s a shame personalities like this will fall at such young age.”

“Ye Zhong looked like he had a shot at breaking through to the condensed prime level before he turned thirty. It’s unfortunate that his family made powerful enemies who don’t really mind taking his life just for face. It is too late for the Ye family to do anything now, isn’t it?”

“Can’t the Ye family see? Do they still think they are the Ye family?”

“A few centuries ago the Ye’s were something. They were undoubtedly the strongest family in Green Moon City, but now... Haha, how much could they achieve by fighting to their last breath?”

Witnessing the two camps’ confrontation and the swarm of butterflies slowly overwhelming Ye Zhong, the Ye family was ridiculed by some members of the audience while the others were shaking their heads and sighing about their misfortune.

“Son of a bitch! I am going to smash your heads in!” Ye Jing Jing’s temper was bad, and seeing Ye Zhong’s end closing in she could no longer just sit and watch. Screw the situation, screw the rules, she was going in no matter what!

“Buzz!”

A thin mist of Qi solidified on Ye Jing Jing’s skin forming a thin but sturdy layer of primal feathers.

“Roar!”

Just as Ye Jing Jing was about to enter the arena and make a move, a deep, powerful roar filled the arena.

The tiger’s roar was fearsome and magnificent, it reached up to the clouds in the blue summer sky!

Ye Zheng Qing, Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong He were all shaken by the noise. They immediately turn their heads in fear toward the source of the uproar.

Everyone’s sight met at the place where a three meter long spectral white tiger emerged from within the swarm of burning butterflies. This beast was horned. Its well defined silver white hair flowed gracefully in the wind.

The tiger’s eyes opened wide, permeating a domineering aura. The king of beasts’ presence was felt and feared by every single one of the burning butterflies!

“Roar! Roar! Roar!”

The horned white tiger looked up to the sky and cried as three consecutive deafening roars exploded the ears of everyone like thunder. The whole arena shook vigorously and the ground started to crack!

Members of the audience who had less than a five star Warrior cultivation covered their ears and cried out in pain. Some of the ones who had yet to reach the Warrior level were knocked unconscious from the impact.

Back in the arena, Du Han Yue was catching his breath still trying to recover from performing a forbidden stance. Stunned by the horned tiger's roar, his face was as pale as chalk from fatigue and fear, and his legs were shaky. The noise penetrated his eardrums and dazed him. He lost his balance, and staggered backwards for six steps. His organs were shaken by the vibration and were aching.

“A blazing horned tiger!” Ye Zheng Qing, Ye Hai, and others in the Ye camp were showing a sense of unshakable amazement from their facial expressions when they saw the horned white tiger.

“Ye Zhong’s White Tiger’s Assault is more powerful than a high level Stance, it’s a Myst stance!”

“Myst stance! Our family now has another Myst stance!” The Ye’s could not suppress the thrills and euphoria and screamed out almost incoherently.

Myst stances were normally exclusive to people who were condensed prime Warriors, or stronger. It was a shock to everyone that Ye Zhong

had such power at his command.

Chapter 36 – The Rise To Fame

“This is White Tiger’s Assault, it is suppose to be strongest of the sixteen high level Spirit stances. If I remember right it is only a peak high level Spirit stance! How come it has the power of a Myst stance!?”

“How can a five star Warrior possess such overwhelming power!?”

A portion of the audience was from martial families, and although the Ye family was not as big as they use to be, they still remembered what kind of firepower the once great Ye’s possessed. They were more shocked than others by this incarnation of the tiger because they knew the Ye family’s stances and the White Tiger’s Assault was suppose to be one of their sixteen high level Spirit stances.

“Ye Zhong isn’t a condensed prime Warrior but he performed a Myst stance! That means he refined and upgraded the White Tiger’s Assault himself!?”

To refine a stance takes a lot of effort, but to increase its rank is a feat; a task that cannot be completed by a Warrior on his own. People were starting suspect the involvement of a Runemaster in Ye Zhong’s training. ‘It can’t be! The Ye family has a Runemaster behind them?’

‘He must have trained and upgraded all his stances with a Runemaster’s aid. That is the only explanation to his sudden breakthrough in such a short time! He was still a four star Warrior three days ago!’

“Maybe the Ye’s really have some connections with Master Yi?” Du Yuan Ming was stunned seeing Ye Zhong bring out the White Tiger’s Assault as a Myst stance. His mind wandered as he tried to reevaluate the situation.

Members of the audience who were still conscious were starting to wonder how could Ye family retaliate this hard. Even general Zhou and president Dong were starting to frown, they might be digging themselves into a sticky situation if there was a Runemaster behind the the Ye’s.

Obviously nobody outside the Ye family would ever imagine that White Tiger’s Assault was upgraded by a thirteen year old South Star Academy junior class student, not even if the Ye family admitted it was done by one. Ye Wei was completely nobody for most people.

To elevate a stance through the barrier between Spirit and Myst level was difficult even for some qualified Runemasters, not to mention that Ye Wei was a junior who had never been taught anything about modifying stances.

“This White Tiger’s Assault, was it refined by Ye Wei too? But how is that possible? Refining it would take time even for Runemasters who are qualified for the job!” Ye Zheng Qing was struggling to make sense out of the situation.

While outsiders were under the impression that the Ye family was hiding a Runemaster somewhere in their dungeons, the Ye camp knew in their hearts that there was no Runemaster behind them.

Ye Wei was the only person in the family who had the talent it took to

become a Runemaster.

“Han Yue, come back!” After the shock, Du Yuan Ming ordered a retreat with his deep, desperate voice. Du Han Yue was pale and weak, there was little chance for him to handle a Myst stance, especially in his current state.

Although Ye Zhong was only a five star Warrior and his Myst stance was obviously not, currently, at its full potential but the sheer power of the stance could not be stopped by anyone below a seven star Warrior.

The tables had turned on the Du family who were now panicking. They were aware that Du Han Yue would be destroyed by the Myst stance. But it was too late for them to do anything!

“I need to get out of this!” Du Han Yue’s senses told him to retreat as the overwhelming force of the White Tiger’s Assault closed in. He was hoping the butterflies would slow the tiger down, but the big cat just powered through as if they were not there. Its unstoppable momentum was in Du Han Yue’s face in no time.

Overwhelmed by fear, Du Han Yue turned around and clumsily sprinted towards the arena entrance. He ran for his life!

“You think you can get away! Don’t you?” Ye Zhong’s blood soaked clothes were in pieces. His eyes were cold and stared at Du Han Yue like a bloodthirsty tiger. He wanted to return the pain he was given.

“Argh!” As Ye Zhong finished his sentence, the horned white tiger

cried. Its deafening roar stunned the target. It then raised its gigantic paw up high and pounced.

The tiger's paw struck towards Du Han Yue's back but a large swarm of butterflies surrounding Du Han Yue was getting in the way.

“Bang!”

Accompanied by a loud noise, caused by the impact, the white tiger's paw scattered layers and layers of butterflies, powering through the resistance and landing on Du Han Yue's back. His back immediately bend and deformed. The massive force connected against Du Han Yue and forced him onto floor of the arena.

“Crack!”

His nose shattered when his face hit the ground. Spiderweb cracks appeared on the arena's foundation made of greenstone.

Du Han Yue squealed like an animal in a slaughterhouse. He was bleeding out of his crooked nostrils.

“I will end you!” Du Han Yue stared at Ye Zhong ferociously from the ground, freaking out as he screamed. He was missing a front tooth, and crawling on the ground like a madman. He was furious. The strongest youngster in the Du family had never lost a fight, and now a five star Warrior completely overpowered him!

Du Han Yue ignored his injuries, and forced more Qi out of his dantian.

The huge swarm of burning butterflies reformed and regrouped then flew towards the white tiger.

“Bang! Bang! Bang!”

Waves after waves of burning butterflies exploded on the white tiger. Ye Zhong grunted and coughed up a lot of blood. Despite being on the ground and in a bad position the six star Warrior’s counter attack was fierce.

“You want to end me? You are not capable of that I’m afraid!” The white tiger soared into the air again. Ye Zhong grunted and ignored the swarm pushing forward with heavy steps that carried the momentum of a landslide.

Ye Zhong’s fearsome force dove from the sky, keeping Du Han Yue on the ground.

“Bang!”

Du Han Yue’s face collided onto the arena grounds again, and blood gushed out of his head. He squealed even louder than before, and the scene gave the audience goosebumps.

“Our family has kept good traditions and honor for generations, you opportunistic, greedy, disrespectful garbage have no rights to get our land!” Ye Zhong said in a cold, heavy tone, the force he used increasing after each word he spoke. The pressure waves clamped Du Han Yue onto the floor.

Du Han Yue was drowning in helplessness under the immense pressure that held him down. His heart was trembling out of fear. He struggled and shook his body, but his attempts to free himself were denied by waves of intensifying force from Ye Zhong. He was completely stuck and there was no way of getting out of the crack on the ground that Ye Zhong made using him as a pick.

There were no unbroken bones or uninjured organs in Du Han Yue's body. If he was not a six star Warrior with a formidable amount of Qi protecting his body, his organs would have been torn apart and he would have died.

Du Han Yue was unresigned. 'How? Why can he use a Myst stance? He's just a five star Warrior...' He coughed up a mouthful of blood and passed out before he could finish his thought.

Feeling that Du Han Yue was done for, Ye Zhong kicked his unconscious opponent out of the arena. After using all his energy on White Tiger's Assault and eating its recoil, although he won, his face was completely white and he was wobbling. It took great effort for him to stay on his feet.

"I cannot fall! I have to stay on my feet. For my family!" Ye Zhong was struggling to keep just his eyes open and stay conscious.

Du Han Yue was defeated?

Everyone was shocked by what they just witnessed. Ye Zhong was barely standing up but he was the victor! It took them a while to digest

this information.

“A five star Warrior defeated a forbidden stance performed by a six star Warrior!”

“There must be a Runemaster behind this! Who is it?” The audience was ecstatic, they were energized by the possible drama and how today’s events might unfold!

With this bloody battle, Ye Zhong had now replaced Du Han Yue as one of the top five youngsters in Green Moon City!

Chapter 37 – Mysterious Youth

If the Ye family really had a Runemaster behind them then overrunning them was not longer as carefree and simple as the Du family initially planned!

Look at the Ye family! They were not as washed-up as everyone imagined. The valiant resistance they showed inspired hundreds at the arena.

Du Yuan Ming looked at Du Han Yue, who was lying motionlessly on the ground, then he shifted his focus to the arena at the staggering Ye Zhong with a murderous glare.

“Du Patriarch, a Warrior who can perform Myst stance... This is fishy!” Dong He spoke up, he was feeling a bit difficult regarding the situation. He closed his eyes then continued calculating. ‘If a Runemaster gets involved I should still be fine. I did not start this dispute. I’m not going to get too involved therefore I can be blameless if this goes south.’

Du Yuan Ming’s face remained straight, and not a word has left his mouth.

“Little Zhong won, our five star Warrior defeated a six star opponent. God bless our family name!” Ye Zheng Qing’s frown loosened, and his aged face once again displayed bottomless delight.

‘None of us in the older generation had the potential little Zhong has, and little Wei clearly has the potential to become a Runemaster. In

twenty years nobody will be able to mess with the Ye family!’

Ye Hai’s hands were shaking. He could not repress his emotions the moment he knew the fight was over. Not only was his son alive, he even won!

“Big brother, you have a great son!” Ye Hai’s siblings all gratefully looked at him with genuine smiles on their faces.

Ye Zhong accomplished a great mission; he defended the Ye family!

“Little brother thank you! We have to thank little Wei too!” Ye Hai thankfully patted Ye Yi’s shoulders. If it wasn’t for the new White Tiger’s Assault Ye Zhong’s life would have been at the Du family’s mercy! Ye Wei contributed the most to him winning this fight!

Hearing Ye Hai’s little speech, Ye Yi became emotional and his eyes were wet. Ye Wei was no longer a sore spot in his heart. Set aside that it was thought to be impossible for him to reach the Warrior level with his red sentient, if the fight did not just end the way it did then Ye Wei would not be able to survive without the protection of their family’s roof.

Ye Yi was still trying to let the news regarding Ye Wei’s talent settle. The power to change the Ye family’s future now lay in his son’s hands. He could not be any prouder.

There is no reason to worry about Ye Wei anymore, he could finally let go of the burden in his mind.

Meanwhile at the Du camp, the patriarch, general, and president were having an unprecedented moment of complete silence.

Du Han Yue was not their main concern. He was gravely injured but as long as he was breathing, the Du family's wealth would fund his recovery. The problem at hand was deciding what their next step would be because of the mystery around Ye Zhong's breakthrough and Myst stance. They had to figure out whether there was a Runemaster behind the Ye family and if so, who it was.

‘Could it really be Master Yi?’ Du Yuan Ming frowned while stuck in deep thought. The Ye family did mention his name.

“Upgrading a Spirit stance to a Myst stance is no easy task. I’m afraid master Yi is the only person in Green Moon City who’s capable doing it!” General Zhou proposed the hypothesis seriously. He was someone that used brute strength, but also one who could think clearly. He was aware that if master Yi was one of Ye family’s allies then he was not willing nor could he afford to step foot in this mess.

Out of the three Runemaster in Green Moon City, Master Yi was indisputably the strongest. He was a ten star Runemaster. Just one step away from becoming a Legendary Grand-Runemaster!

The amount of Grand-Runemaster in the dynasty could be counted on one hand. Their supreme existence was unchallenged. In remote cities like Green Moon personalities like Master Yi were not to be messed with, and even the City Lord, himself, would think twice before saying anything to him.

General Zhou and Dong Ho looked into each other's eyes and exchanged a solemn, careful expression.

"This is impossible! If the Ye family was that close to Master Yi then why isn't the Runemaster at the arena to spectate?" The Du Patriarch could feel that Zhou Wu and Dong He's determination was softening, and he desperately attempted to rally his camp.

For the Ye family, Zhou Wu and Dong Ho were invited by the patriarch to help complete his scheme. They were not villains in the Ye's eyes like the Du family was. If the Ye family could get past today, the Du family was going to be the target of revenge!

The Du family had already passed the point of no return! Their best option was to deliver the knockout punch to the Ye's right here and now!

Du Yuan Ming snorted and said: "The Ye family is bluffing maybe Master Yi unintentionally refined a stance for Ye Zhong when he was experimenting or something, but knowing Master Yi's hermit lifestyle, the chances of him getting involved in our dispute is zero! Why would he help the Ye family?"

Zhou Wu and Dong Ho considered the patriarch's reasoning in silence and eventually saw the logic in it.

"If we get our hands on their ancestral land at North Hill Bay and hand it to mister Lu Feng, he would most definitely be on our side! Plus, the Ye family has already stamped the contract, with the document in hand all we need to do is win the duel. At that point even if Master Yi wanted to do something about the situation, he couldn't!" Du Yuan Ming ground

his teeth and said coldly, this is all or nothing!

“Brother Du, Han Yue the strongest of our youngsters has been defeated, and you only have a handful of five star Warriors at your disposal. Although Ye Zhong has already been weakened and I don’t think any of them can finish him!” Dong Ho was looking at Ye Zhong while still on his feet. And in Dong Ho’s eyes he was still hiding some tricks up his burnt and bloody sleeves.

“He has a Myst stance at his command, Dong He is right this could be tricky!” General Zhou Wu said with a straight face. If Ye Zhong can perform White Tiger’s Assault just once more, anyone lesser than a six star Warrior will not stand a chance! It’s the last man, we can’t risk it!

“Before this day came, I had a long talk with Lu Feng, and it’s lucky for us he over-prepared... If a six star Warrior can’t put Ye Zhong down then we will send a seven star Warrior into the arena!” Du Yuan Ming looked at the group of youngsters who stood behind him, focused on the stern looking mysterious teenager.

That young seven star Warrior was Lu Feng’s friend, but his last name was not Du.

“Who of you dare face me?” Ye Zhong gathered his strength and roared. His words echoed throughout the arena as he scanned the scared faces of the youngster standing in the Du camp.

‘Just one more fight. One more win until our ancestral land is safe!’

Feeling Ye Zhong's determination and seeing his fierce glance, the five star Warriors of the Du camp were hesitant and some were even trembling in fear. The image of Du Han Yue's horrifying defeat was still freshly implanted in their heads.

“Little Zhong, don’t force yourself!” Seeing Ye Zhong’s blood stained clothes and body, the Ye family looked very concerned. He was just a five star Warrior, although he did beat Du Xian Hong and Du Han Yue it was uncertain whether he could take on another five star Warrior the Du family would send into the arena.

“If I’m breathing, I will be fighting! I am not going to step out of this arena!” Ye Zhong ground his teeth in pain. He grunted and spoke, “Ye is my last name and I will defend our history and honor!”

Fight!

It’s the only way! He had done this much and gone this far. Ye Zhong planned to defeat the last person the Du family sent out even if he was going to die of fatigue. He was one step away from saving his family from this crisis!

Meanwhile, the stern looking youngster walked through the Du camp slowly. He rolled up his sleeves as he leisurely approached the arena, not looking concerned at all.

“I admire your courage, but the party’s over. You will lose now!” He calmly said to Ye Zhong while closing in on him.

Chapter 38 – Seven Star Warrior

“Who is that teenager?”

The Ye family was in touch with the current affairs of Green Moon City, and had knowledge of the other families' strengths and weaknesses. They also kept track of the up-and-coming youngsters of this generation. However nobody in the Ye camp recognized this teenager's stern looking face.

Ye Zheng Qing researched the Du family, and he knew every single one of them well. His heart sank as he saw this teenager's face. The patriarch's eagle-like eyes darted to Du Yuan Ming: “Is this kid one of yours?”

Hearing Ye Zheng Qing's question, the people around the arena immediately cast their eyes onto the Du Patriarch. They were not stupid and they knew that it was entirely possible that Du family was now seeking help from outside the family in desperation!

“Of course he's one of us!” Du Yuan Ming said loudly and proudly.

“Bullshit! We know about the new generation of Du family! Who are you trying to fool?” Ye Hai couldn't hold himself back and therefore screamed in anger. He knew there were only three youngsters left on the family's roster; only three five star Warriors were left, and with Du Han Yue defeated, Ye Zhong's chances were not low. But now Du Han Yue summoned this teenager with an unknown background, everyone could smell something fishy!

Du Yuan Ming stared at Ye Hai coldly and grunted, " You have no grounds to question me. I am the Du Patriarch if I say he's with us, then he is with us. Why would I lie? We are a great branch of a well established family in the capital! There are tens of thousands of Du's within the dynasty's borders!"

It was obvious that Du Yuan Ming was giving lame excuses and lying. The audience was speculating and discussing how low, and shameful the Du family was, but no one dared stand up for the Ye family. The truth had always been whatever the powerful insist it to be!

Everyone in the Ye camp was enraged by Du Yuan Ming's blatant lie. 'If they are not going to abide by the agreement, we are not going sit back and get bullied!'

"Gramps, even if I die, I will not accept this humiliation! I, Ye Qiu, volunteer to fight these despicable liars!" Her eyes were teary as she asked the patriarch.

"Dad, let me fight! I will defend our dignity by any means necessary!" Ye Hai said furiously.

The Du family stepped on the Ye's again and again, and the Ye's just stayed quiet and dealt with the hardship as they came. But cheating was not quite the same thing, especially when there was a written agreement.

"Stand still! Nobody said you can step foot into the arena!"

Just when that stern looking teenager was about to enter Ye Yi, the ten star Warrior, shouted with uncontrollable rage. He fiercely took a step and turned into a flash. His body now blocked the teenager.

“This is a duel between the Ye and Du families’ younger generation!” Ye Yi stared coldly down at the teenager’s eyes then he shouted again. “Are you one of the Du’s?”

The teenager indifferently looked at Ye Yi. In his mind, if he lies and declares that he is a Du, it would be the same as betraying his ancestry which he was too proud to do, and telling the truth would not help the situation therefore he decided not to speak a word.

The teenage’s silence just confirmed everyone’s suspicion!

“Du Yuan Ming, this kid is not one of you! Why would you let an outsider fight for you in a family duel? Has your family run out of talent?” Ye Yi pointed at the patriarch and furiously shouted.

“General Zhou, President Dong, that teen is obviously an outsider don’t tell me you think otherwise? The Du family is cheating, can’t you see?” Ye Hai gazed at the two men who were suppose to be judges for this duel, and questioned them in a furious tone.

“Well, what do you want now? This is a duel between the young ones! You are one generation too old to step in. Are you going to ignore the rules? I am the representative of the City Lord, and we do not tolerate cheaters!” General Zhou raised his voice, and not only did he evaded Ye Hai’s question, he even accused the Ye family of attempting to break the rules.

“Step back! All of you! How dare you entering the arena? Do you know no shame? Do not forget you signed the contract! You are breaking the terms!” Dong He squinted his eyes and said, the pressure of Lu Feng was more realistic to him than the potential of angering a hermit therefore he chose to stand by the Du family.

“Us? We are breaking the rules? Hahaha!” Ye Zheng Qing was extremely angry, and laughed hysterically. “Our family has been through its ups and downs throughout the centuries. Even when we were going through bad times, we kept our dignity and always made the honorable decisions! We don’t make trouble, but we are not afraid to confront others when they cause trouble!”

Ye Zheng Qing was furious to the point where he was willing to sacrifice anything, even his own life, to get revenge. These three were abusing their influence, resources, and power for evil and personal gain; they are poison to society. It was obvious that they could care less about any kind of rules. This was just about ending the Ye family!

First the Du family shamelessly used the hands of outsiders in a family dispute, then Zhou Wu and Dong He ignored fairness and sportsmanship, and lastly this unreasonable accusation!

This was ridiculous!

The audience was talking amongst themselves and all their respect for the Du family had just vanished, but they didn’t have the power, nor the guts, to interfere... The Du family will eventually become a public enemy because nobody will be able to trust them!

“Du Patriarch, this is a serious matter please think before you take any action!” Someone from the crowd could no longer hold their tongue.

Hearing that the crowd was joining in, Du Yuan Ming’s face looked even more twisted than it already was, but he could not back down now. The Ye family had to be eliminated right now before they grew big again!

“You’re saying he’s not one of us because you have not seen him? What kind of reasoning is that? Where is your evidence?” Du Yuan Ming shouted as he kept taunting and beckoning the Ye family hoping they would become more restless and start a brawl.

Though justice was on the Ye family’s side, general Zhou and president Dong were on the Du family’s side and with their aid the Du camp was many times stronger than the Ye camp.

With that in mind, Du Yuan Ming wasn’t worried about fighting them at all. He was just a bit worried about the Ye family’s possible, self-proclaimed, relationship with Master Yi.

Du Yuan Ming was a calculating, cautious man. He was taunting non-stop because the sooner he could wipe out the Ye family the less chance there was for them to say anything wrong, or reveal possible evidence against them in the case Master Yi does come to investigate.

“Haha! Do you think the Ye family is made up of imbeciles? Let’s try this!” The Ye Patriarch spoke to Du Yuan Ming with a cold grin. “You! Which branch of the Du family are you from? And where did you grow up?”

“If he is a Du I will rest my case. Win or lose, I shall accept the results, but on the contrary if he’s not we will not sit here and let you do as you please!” Ye Zheng Qing looked intensely at Du Yuan Ming and said in a low voice.

Ye Zheng Qing and his family were not going to give the Du Patriarch an inch; they will not compromise.

The situation was at a stand off, and everyone knew a fight could breakout at any moment.

“Ye Zheng Qing, I know it’s hard for you to trust the Du family but you trust the City Lord’s judgement, right?” General Zhou took a step forward and said slowly.

“Yea, you two have had some misunderstandings and disagreements. Ye Patriarch we understand your misgivings with the Du family, but general Zhou and I are the judges for this fight and you trust us, right? That teenager is definitely a Du!” President Dong stated diplomatically.

“Pfft, trust you? You are hilarious!” Ye Zheng Qing started laughed hysterically. He wanted to kill everyone of these liars. He now regretted that he did not train hard enough. If he was stronger his family would have justice!

“Looks like I have to do something to maintain order!” General Zhou swung his right arm and the power of a seven star condensed prime Warrior was unleashed. The telekinetic force knocked Ye Yi into the air and out of the arena.

Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were keeping the Ye family in check using their condensed prime Warrior power.

Ye Zhong was the only person left standing in the arena.

“Finally all the trash has been taken out!” The stern looking teenager grinned and jumped into the arena his body covered by a feather like shiny texture. He looked at Ye Zhong with a cruel, sadistic smile and said, “Don’t worry, I will keep your corpse in one piece!”

Primal feathers, seven star Warrior!

Just as the audience thought they had seen all there was today, they were again shocked, this time by a baby-faced seven star Warrior!

Ye Zhong clenched his fist as he looked at the teenager with worry in his eyes.

Ye Zheng Qing on the other hand was using his power and trying to combat the three Warrior’s oppressive auras. “Du Yuan Ming, just bring it on if you want to wipe us out cut the acting!”

“Brother Ye you are taking this whole thing too personally, I really am a reasonable man!” The Du Patriarch looked relaxed smiling when he spoke.

The big battle was now underway and a cold atmosphere slowly

covered the arena.

The Ye family had never before been humiliated like this. Just before the fight was going to start a familiar childlike boy ran into the arena.

Chapter 39 – Concession

The duel between the Ye and Du family's youngsters occupied Ye Wei's mind. Ye Wei could not think about anything else as he was running back home. He was anxious and restless about the situation back at the arena. He was running home at full speed, and despite recently breaking through and becoming a three star Student his body was still not strong enough to cover the trip's distance at full speed.

All eyes suddenly gathered on Ye Wei.

The two supporters for the Du camp were agitated by his arrival, it was plausible that he went to see Master Yi judging by his means of transportation on his way out. Depending on the result of this hypothetical meeting they might have to alter their course of action.

“Little Wei, did you meet with Master Yi?” Ye Wei could not have come at a better time, and Zheng Qing did not give Ye Wei anytime to catch his breath. He asked anxiously, his gaze was serious.

Everyone was thirsty for Ye Wei's answer.

“We did meet...” Overwhelmed by the crowd's enthusiasm and embarrassed by the outcome, Ye Wei lowered his head and answered quietly.

With a rush of blood to his head he was starting to flush. It was not easy to tell others the shameful news.

The Du camp was pressured by his arrival while Ye Wei's whole family was momentarily encouraged by the potential good news. But Ye Wei knew how things would go...

Just thinking about the consonance test results made him bitter. He bit his lips due to his nerves. The burden in his heart made him clench his fist extremely tight and his nails were going to leave red marks on his palm. The pain in his heart was so agonising he didn't feel pain on his lips or his hands.

What did his phenomenal soul sensibility mean? Where would his rune knowledge get him? Ye Wei knew that even though his performance on the tests showed that he was better than most Runemasters, his horrendous rune consonance made the meeting with Master Yi meaningless. How could one become a Runemaster if he can't even perform a stance?

“What did Master Yi say?” Ye Zheng Qing questioned with great enthusiasm.

‘Ye Wei was born to become a Runemaster. It took him only three days to refine three stances for Ye Zhong, a task even real Runemasters would find challenging.’

‘With this level of talent getting accepted by Master Yi was almost a given, even becoming the Master’s legacy apprentice was not out of Ye Wei’s reach! If that were the case with Master Yi’s guidance it wouldn’t take long for Ye Wei to become a Runemaster.’ The patriarch thought to himself.

Ye Zheng Qing dedicated his whole life nurturing the Ye family, from babysitting to dealing with their business. Now at his old age and despite his time and effort he still had not been rewarded for what he gave the family; the family was still weakening and falling apart bit by bit. He was a three star condensed prime Warrior, but he was also an infirm old man with unfulfilled dreams.

At this point, there was nothing more uplifting than seeing his children and grandchildren achieving greatness!

“I’m sorry...” Ye Wei looked completely deflated. His family’s eyes were stabbing his heart like sharp knives.

Ye Zheng Qing flinched. He didn’t need further explanation nor did Ye Wei did elaborate. All his bubbles burst and bitterness was the only thing left, ‘How naive was I? It’s Master Yi we’re talking about in the end. The strict and eccentric Runemaster..’

“Little Wei, I am sure you did your best. We have no other choice. We’ll have to give up the land by North Hill Bay and start again somewhere far from Green Moon City.’ Ye Zheng Qing thought about fighting to his last breath, but in the end it was just out of his character which put his family’s future and well-being before everything else.

Meanwhile the Du camp was speculating.

“General Zhou, president Dong, looks like they were bluffing in the end. If Master Yi was on their side he would have arrived in a runicle for this emergency!” Du Yuan Ming said in a mocking tone, nothing worried

him now and he felt on top of the world.

“You are right!” Dong Ho laughed and said, “Without a Runemaster the Ye family is nothing to be afraid of! Ha!”

“I’m afraid they won’t see the sunrise tomorrow!” General Zhou roared as killing intent was emanating out of his body.

Ye Zheng Qing slowly looked up towards the arena at Ye Zhong who was injured and barely standing. If he kept fighting he would die. After an easy risk assessment, the Ye Patriarch announced: “Du Yuan Ming. We concede, our ancestral land is yours!” He swallowed his pride while trembling in frustration and grief.

The audience had mixed feelings. They came anticipating a one sided duel and wanted to see the Du family showcase their power, but having witnessed the Ye family’s resilience against these cheats they started to empathize and root for the underdogs. They actually felt uneasy now that it was all over and started to worry about themselves.

‘We might be the next victim of the Du family’s schemes!’

“You think this is over? Ye Zheng Qing, just who do you think we are?” Du Yuan Ming said and casted an evil gaze at the Ye Patriarch. He would not let the Ye family off that easily, especially now that the relationship between them the worst ever.

“Du Yuan Ming what more do you want!?” Ye Zheng Qing’s heart dropped. The two people that mattered most to him were Ye Wei and Ye

Zhong. These two cousins were the key to the Ye family reestablishing themselves after today's slaughter.

"Ye Zhong injured Han Yue, he is not leaving the arena with his arms and legs!" Du Han Yue's voice was malicious. He scanned the Ye camp and found Ye Wei. Pointing his finger at the depressed young cousin, Du Yuan Ming continued. "I want him crippled as well!"

He wanted to eliminate all threats, and kill the ones with potential while they were still young; put all the eggs in a basket and destroy them together. These were the guidelines the Du family stood by, and also the reason why they became one of the Big Three in less than a hundred years after they started their business in Green Moon City.

Du Yuan Ming's eyes and attitude reminded Ye Wei of a nasty, venomous snake. He was scared and angry at himself. 'Why couldn't I be stronger...'

Ye Wei's Sentient was boiling, and a golden flash appeared. He longed for power, the ability to make a difference.

He was tired of feeling helpless!

"Du Yuan Ming, You ought to stop now!" Ye Zheng Qing could no longer keep his cool as he screamed his lungs out. If Ye Zhong and Ye Wei were going to be neutralised here then there would be no outs for the Ye family, not now not ever.

"Me? Stop? I am a fair man and I stand by my decisions!" Du Yuan

Ming then laughed hysterically, and attacked the Ye camp with his sonic waves. His condensed prime cultivation was translated into pressure waves. The force was almost as strong as a landslide!

“I am only going to say this once more. Though we are not as great as we once were the Ye family still carries great tradition and history! I have lived long enough!” Ze Zheng Qing finally made up his mind to be reckless. “We will end this right now!”

“You are so naive! Ending this? What with?” Du Yuan Ming chuckled indifferently. Master Yi wasn’t here with the Ye family while he had aid of general Zhou and president Dong who were both stronger than Ye Zheng Qing in terms of cultivation. “I was never scared of you and your pathetic family. I was just waiting for this little one to return so I can save a trip!”

Although the the odds were against them, the Ye family prepared themselves as they reached their last straw. Everyone started channeling their Qi which then merged into a pressure wave, shooting towards Du Yuan Ming’s attack.

“Boom!”

The two pressure waves collided and exploded. The pressure wave kept coming from both camps, and the continuous impact eventually turned the greenstone floor into dust.

“Since you guys are fighting instead of obeying the winner’s request we are going to join in!” Dong Ho’s squinted eyes opened, and he stared coldly at the Ye camp.

General Zhou and Dong He joined the fight as Dong He finished his excuse of a speech. The force wave from Du camp enlarged and started crushing the Ye camp

Chapter 40 – Bones

Du Yuan Ming and general Zhou were both seven star condensed prime Warriors. Dong Ho was slightly behind being a five star condensed prime Warrior.

On the other hand, the Ye camp only had two condensed prime level Warriors. The strongest of them being the patriarch with a three star condensed prime cultivation.

The three strongest Warriors in the Du camp were more than capable of wiping out the Ye family on their own! And all three of them intended to kill.

“Bang! Bang! Bang!”

The three strongest force waves from the Du camp merged and clashed onto the Ye family’s defense.

Ye Zhong, Ye Wei, and other weaker ones’ meridians were shaken and hurt by the force wave. They were knocked down on their knees and coughed up blood.

“Damn it!” Ye Wei could barely breathe under the immense pressure. He desperately tried to draw power from his Sentient as he channeled all his Qi to fight the crushing power of the three high level condensed prime Warriors. But the gap was too vast. Ye Wei could feel, and almost hear, his Sentient cracking.

Du Yuan Ming's first step was to destroy all the younger Ye's!

Seeing the youngster being hit, Ye Zheng Qing became anxious. If this continues he would become a witness to the end of his own bloodline!

"I guess it's now or never!" A determined look briefly flashed through Ye Zheng Qing's eyes before he looked down at his hand. A glinting and translucent bone bracelet滑ed down from his wrist.

There were eighteen pieces of bone fragments in the chain. The engraved fragments emitted a weak iridescent glow. The runes engraved onto the fragments started glowing brighter as the patriarch injected his Qi into the artifact, and waves of rippling energy burst out from the chain.

Mystic Arm!

Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho all looked extremely concerned seeing what Ye Zheng Qing was holding in his hand as if the glow of the bone fragments stunned them.

Ye Zheng Qing was levels weaker than his three opponents, he should have been neutralised within moments because of the gap in power. But after seeing the bracelet, the three were hesitant as they weren't sure what power it held.

Although they were now a washed up family, the Ye's were once indisputably the most powerful presence in Green Moon City. History

was history, and stories did not threaten the Du camp, but the family's heirlooms did!

Lu Feng wanted the land at North Hill Bay which was basically already in his pocket so now the Du Patriarch wanted to wipe them out. Fighting the Ye family was not really General Zhou's business anymore; he was not willing to risk his life fighting an unknown artifact because his job was done. He quickly backed away behind Du Yuan Ming and said "I will go after Ye Hai, the Ye Patriarch is all yours!"

General Zhou took off towards Ye Hai before Du patriarch could reply.

"I will take on the rest of the Ye family!" Dong Ho tried to make avoiding confronting Ze Zheng Qing's secret weapon sound just as he headed towards the second generation of Ye's.

Both Dong Ho and Zhou Wu laid their eyes on the artifact with greed. But the Ye Patriarch was not that weak, and with the power of his bracelet still being a mystery the two were not willing to risk too much.

Du Yuan Ming too was somewhat scared by the green glow of the bracelet.

Mystic Arms can store stances which were activated by the Qi of the user. They were sorted into five different grades, low, medium, top, imperial, and sacred. Each grade then divided into ten star levels.

Low grade arms store Spirit stances, and they glow black when activated.

Medium grade arms store Myst stances, and glow green while activated. Top grade arms store Earth stances, and have a silver glow; whereas Imperial grade arms store Sky stances, they glow gold while activated.

Sacred grade arms, rare as they were, store Heaven stances and glow purple!

Mystic Arms were crafted from bones of rare beasts and demons. Some of these powerful creatures carry stances in their bodies and bones therefore their remains were always sought after by men. And these artifacts even low grade ones were very rare. The stances within are unique and therefore hard to deal with.

Judging by the glow, Ye Zheng Qing's Mystic Arm was medium grade. There were less than five pieces of that quality in all of Green Moon City, and all of them were valued family heirlooms that won't be put to use unless absolutely necessary. The fact that Ye Patriarch owns this piece adds a bit more mystery to the Ye family's history.

The power of a medium grade arm was great enough to threaten condensed prime Warriors.

“No wonder why you refused to hand your ancestral land over. What else do you have up your sleeve old fart?” Du Yuan Ming glared at the Ye Patriarch with intensity.

Du Yuan Ming's cultivation advantage over Ye Zheng Qing had just been evened by the artifact as such the result of the fight was not so clear

all of a sudden.

The audience was surprised to see what the Ye Patriarch was holding.

“That green glow! The Ye family is holding nothing back! I had no idea they had access a Mystic Arm!”

“The Ye family is full of surprises aren’t they! Do you think Du Patriarch can deal with the Mystic Arm?”

Some of the audience were drooling over Ye Patriarch’s artifact hoping that the two families will weaken each other, and when the chance presents itself the Mystic Arm would be up for grabs. Medium grade arms talk louder than money does.

“Is it really a good move showing his bracelet this soon? Or fighting the Du family at all? He might be able to take down Du Patriarch, but is it really worth... That medium grade arm will just end up in Zhou Wu or Dong Ho’s hands!”

“This is going to get messy kind of exciting isn’t it?” Stronger members of the audience were just standing back and waiting for the start.

Du Yuan Ming laughed, “Ye Zheng Qing, do you think you are the only person here with dirty tricks up your sleeves? You’re not seriously thinking you can save your family with that sissy bracelet do you? Let me tell you a little secret, we have back-up! Someone high up and powerful wants your land. It’s not convenient for him to show his face, but he did give us a few things to help seal the deal! You have no chance against us

what you just did is basically handing over a valuable item!"

The whole Ye camp heard what he said, and their hearts dropped. Ye Zheng Qing was saddened. Just the thought of a powerful figure behind this campaign scared him. 'Who is powerful enough to use Du family as a chess piece? What have I done wrong to deserve this?'

The Ye family was full of questions. They had never been this scared. However, there was one person who was more angry than he was scared. Ye Wei had been through a lot lately, all the negativity converted to anger then despair.

'I swear if I live this day, I will find out who is behind this, and whoever it is will pay for the suffering of my family!' Ye Wei swore.

"Power speaks for itself! Watch this! Ye Patriarch and you will see how little you and your family are!" Du Yuan Ming laughed and fetched three scrolls from his pocket; the three scrolls the radiated a faint green light.